TURN TO PAGE 495.

SHORT STORIES.

No. 746.] Week ending April 18th, 1903. [Price One Penny.

"BOBBY, THAT'S YOUR DADDY! TAKE THIS LETTER AND TELL HIM I WROTE IT FOR HIM. TELL HIM THAT YOU ARE HUNGRY."

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A good housekeeper thinks
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SHORT STORIES

No. 746.] [ONE PENNY.

For the Week Ending April 18th, 1903.

How Easily Things Go Wrong.

The Tale of a Misunderstanding and a Reconciliation.

Containing the Incident Depicted on the Cover.

"OH, how easily things go wrong!" That is the opinion of a poet, and proofs of the accuracy of his words are to be found all about us. The story of Robert and Agnes Mason is one of those proofs, with its lesson for all who care to learn it.

Can things be righted again? Not easily, and the poet says that they are "never the same again; yet in some few cases a quarrel and subsequent misery are effaced by the greater happiness—the more solid joy—that follows. Whether this was so or not in the case of Robert and Agnes Mason, the following narrative will show.

It would be difficult to say exactly when the change began. No two people could be more fond of one another than they when they married, and if they had overheard the remark of an elderly woman who saw them leave the church, they would have laughed her to scorn.

"I fear they are a fair-weather couple," she observed, shaking her head slowly; "and they will be happy so long as trouble keeps away from them. Yet, perhaps trouble will do them good in the end!"

No trouble could shake their affection for each other, they would have said, but the change did come. Robert Mason had been brought up by his doting father in a manner suited for a man of large means; he had received a public school education, and had travelled.

On attaining his majority, he had vaguely anticipated that money would be his, but he learnt that his father had none to give.

John Mason had lavished money on his son with the idea that his education and travelling would so sharpen him that he would be fitted to take up some line of work and carve a road to fortune for himself. The particular kind of work was left to circumstances; "the boy would discover what he was most fitted for," was the father's conclusion.

Robert tried several things and contrived to exist with the aid of a small sum which his father was able to allow him; at the end of two years, when his father died, he was making a fair living with his pen.

Not having too large a share of the circulating medium, he arrived at the paradoxical conclusion that it would go farther if divided between himself and somebody else. He had fallen in love with Agnes Torrens, an attractive young woman; they were both full of the hopefulness of youth, they both believed that Robert was bound to make a name and earn a constantly-increasing income, so they married.

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A year passed very, very happily, but after the birth of the baby there was a change in their circumstances. Robert determined to try a novel, and for that reason had relinquished some of the regular journalistic and literary work which had supported them.

Money was becoming scarce, and they were running into debt, but it was all to be set right when the novel was finished. Robert indulged in dreams of the extent of the sum which would be paid to him for the copyright, if he sold it, or the total of the royalties he would receive on the sale of so many thousand copies of his work. They would be rich.

It was a great shock to Robert and Agnes when the novel was refused by the publisher to whom it was first offered; and the refusal was repeated by all the chief publishing firms as he tried them one after another.

The book had good points, but——. Then followed a reason that differed every time. Robert Mason became morose; angry with Fate, he turned his attention to the work he had secretly despised before the failure.

This trial brought out the weakness of both natures. Agnes told him that he ought to have made his characters do this or that, as she had originally suggested, or thought she had suggested; her husband was annoyed, his pride was hurt, and he answered that she knew nothing about it.

In less than another six months, things had gone wrong with their happiness; there was constant quarrelling—petty quarrels, just bad enough to make life miserable, no blows as with many others, but sharp speeches that cut quickly into the sensitive natures.

If Robert had had success in his journalistic career, all might have gone smoothly, but ill-luck pursued him and his earnings dwindled until they were living in genteel poverty.

At last it came to a bitter altercation, in which each said more than he or she had intended.

Stabbed, figuratively, by the unrestrained language of the other, the two young people stood facing each other with flaming eyes and hot cheeks.

"I could keep myself and baby better than you can keep us, if I were free from the worry of this wretched place!" she had said in a fit of ungovernable rage, and the words rankled in his heart.

"I'll leave you to do it!" were his last words, as he opened the door of the apartment and passed out.

She heard his steps as he descended the stairs, and then

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came what Tom Hood called a wooden oath—the slamming of the door—and she was alone.

During the remainder of the day she had time to reflect and she felt that she had gone too far; yet he had done the same and it was not her fault! She first tried to excuse herself, and then she began to say that he didn't mean it and would come back at night.

As the time wore on and evening approached, she felt rather awkward; Robert would be back shortly—how would he greet her and how would she receive him. The first moment would be a trying one, but she resolved to act bravely and welcome him frankly, should he enter in sullen silence.

But evening became night and her husband did not return. The cold pain at her heart grew more intense as the minutes ticked away by the cheap clock. She waited until two o'clock, when she threw herself on the bed and cried herself to sleep.

With the morning her mood changed. If he cared so little for her she could get along without him! Perhaps he would return after two or three days, thinking that his absence and the prospect of gaining her own livelihood would have frightened and humbled her. He would find out how mistaken he was!

She gathered a few things together and called the landlady.

"We owe you several weeks' rent, Mrs. Amer," she said quietly. "If Mr. Mason comes back, he will settle with you. If he doesn't, there is enough furniture here to repay you."

The landlady was not particularly surprised; it was not the first couple who had parted while living as tenants in the house she rented. It was none of her business, although she felt a little sorry for both, and the furniture would cover the back rent, there was just enough for that purpose.

"Very well, ma'am!" she said indifferently. "I suppose Mr. Mason will know where to find you?"

"Oh, there is no need to worry about that!" declared Agnes.

Mrs. Amer, finding that her departing tenant was not inclined to be communicative, did not condescend to say more, but retired. Agnes managed to get a cab and soon afterwards drove away with her few belongings and her baby boy, going to another part of the great city where she had lived four years previously.

It was during the evening of the same day that Robert Mason returned. He had received a commission to explore a district of the East End by night and he had carried out the task and had written his description of what he had seen.

In his anger, he had decided not to send word to Agnes, telling himself that it would do her good to think that he had taken her at her word and kept his threat. He returned with a couple of sovereigns in his pocket and feeling somewhat ashamed and penitent.

It was a silly thing to quarrel and he regretted the scene. It was not all his fault; Agnes was quite as much to blame as he and she had a bitter tongue when she liked to let it run loose; yet he was the stronger partner and he would restrain his own feelings and try to make things go more smoothly.

Agnes was gone! She had left no note for him, but there was no doubt about it, for the ransacked drawers told the story.

He called the landlady, only to receive confirmation of his fears. Robert Mason's heart grew hard against his wife and the feeling of repentance vanished.

It did not occur to him that his own silence had been the chief cause of her disappearance; he did not, in his disturbed mental condition, rightly understand what Mrs. Amer said and he jumped to the conclusion that Agnes had left soon after his departure on the preceding day.

His mind was quickly made up; he was able to pay some of the rent and thus redeem a few of his household goods, and with those he removed to another lodging.

Two days later he called on Mrs. Amer and left his address, in case Agnes repented.

"I will not destroy all trace and all chance of a reconciliation!" he muttered.

But no sign came from Agnes and, to drown his troubles, Robert began to drink, spending most of his earnings in intoxicants and steadily going the path that leads to disaster.

The months went by, Robert Mason did not know how many. Sometimes he would be pulled round by friendly advice or a slight accident, and he would go on steadily and soberly for a time, only to lapse again.

During these intervals he would try to find Agnes, and it was probably failure to trace her that caused the lapse.

It was while under the influence of a convivial gathering that he found her and lost her again because he did not know it. Yet that incident marked a change for the better and brightened his life.

He was proceeding rather unsteadily along a wide thoroughfare when a woman spoke to him. She was dressed in ragged garments and her face was pinched with want.

She was holding a child by the hand, and she addressed him with feverish eagerness, like one who had made up her mind to a course of action beset with difficulties and yet shrinks from it.

It was Agnes Mason, seeking reconciliation and forgiveness. She had tried to find him for many weary weeks, for her child was often on the verge of starvation and her mother's heart was lacerated by the child's suffering.

For herself she cared little, yet she yearned for the happy life of those first months and wished—oh, so ardently!—that it were possible to forget the later months.

She sacrificed all her pride for her child, and went to the old lodging to humble herself, ready to take all the blame on her own shoulders, for the sake of the boy. It had been a hard struggle for her, and her health had failed her.

Mrs. Amer was there no longer, and the new landlady knew nothing of Mr. Mason! Agnes had sought him in vain, and now she saw him coming!

"Robert!" she cried, raising her hand to place it on his arm.

He looked at her stupidly, but she did not notice the dull appearance of his eyes and the wooden expression of his face. He pushed her aside roughly and passed on. She sank with a moan to the pavement. He had pushed her from his life; he did not want her!

She arose hurriedly as a thought struck her. Catching the child by the shoulder, she pointed to the retreating figure which was still only a few yards distant.

"Go to that gentleman, Bobby, and tell him that you are his little sonny, as you tell mamma sometimes! He is your daddy. Take this letter and tell him I wrote it for him! Don't let him go! If he tries to leave you, cry loud! He has the pennies to buy you something to eat and he will give you something. Tell him that you are hungry!"

She pushed the boy along with the same feverish haste, running with him almost to the man who had spurned her. Then she left the child to give the message as best he might and hid herself in a doorway to watch the result.

Her heart beat high as she saw Robert Mason stop and listen to the boy. She saw him take the letter. An impulse prompted her to run up to her husband, but she crushed it down. She might spoil all by intruding.

Robert would probably care for the boy, it was his responsibility, but he would not want her—he did not want her! Something in her heart told her that the child would be all right, so she turned and fled from the spot.

Robert Mason tried to read the letter, but his eyes were dimmed. What was the child talking about?

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"What do you say?" he asked, trying to speak softly and encouragingly.

"Mamma says you're my daddy! I'm hungry!" the child, about three years old now, spoke in a tone more befitting an older boy. He would have been dubbed "old-fashioned" by grown-ups. "I want a cake, daddy!"

"This is amusing!" muttered Robert, striving to fix his attention on the child and so clear his own muddled brain. "He's quaint! I say, what's your name, now?"

"Robert Mason!" pronounced the child, quite distinctly, showing that he had learnt it as a special lesson.

"What?" cried the man in amazement. "Here, come into this—. No, not there! I'll find a tea-shop!"

He caught the boy up in his arms and moved off with him. He didn't know what he was going to do exactly, but the haze was clearing from his brain. By the time he had seated the child on a chair in a cheap tea-room, holding him with one hand, Robert Mason was not far from sober.

"It's true!" he gasped. "The boy's the very image of *her!* What's it mean? Yes, this note!" He read it and his face became ashen in hue. "Did your mamma give you this? Where is she?"

The child replied in two or three broken sentences, and Mason gathered an idea of the truth. He caught up the child again and literally ran back to the spot where the child had come up to him, as nearly as he could remember, but he found no trace of Agnes. She had slipped from him once more.

* * * * *

Another two years have gone, and they have wrought a great change in Robert Mason. The entrance of the child into his life, the constant reminder of his lost wife in the boy's striking resemblance to her, had been the means of turning him aside from the path he was following, and making him work with dogged stubbornness to gain a name as a journalist and author.

After much hard work the tide had turned and he was on the road to success.

His great opportunity had come in connection with a play for a provincial touring company; a man for whom he did a good turn in an unexpected manner gave him this opportunity and he was able to take it. This was such a success that his reputation spread and he was soon represented on the London "boards," but the public did not know him as Robert Mason.

"My dear fellow, you must have a more fetching name than that, to take *my* public!" expostulated the manager of the touring company. "We must alter it. Let me see. Mason, Masson, Marston. Yes, Marston is all right. We have added a little, that's all! Robert Marston? H'm! How would Marston Roberts do?"

"You are adding more now!" laughed Mason, thinking of the addition of the "s" to "Robert."

"You've hit it!" cried the manager. "Marston More! See? Sounds like Marston Moor—historical name, you know; a big battle fought there. We'll call you that. You're not the first man who has taken the name of a place as his pseudonym!"

And so it came about that Agnes, watching for any sign of her husband, heard of the fame of Marston More, dramatist and novelist, and did not know that it was Robert Mason's assumed name.

"Now, Bobbie!" exclaimed Robert Mason gaily to his five-year-old son. "I'm going to take you to the theatre to see the ladies and gentlemen saying the things that dad puts down on the paper."

"I like the ladies and gent'men!" declared Bobby comfortably.

"If this company treats you as the others did at rehearsals, you ought to like ladies and gent'men!" laughed his father. "They'll spoil you."

He looked much older than the man who had slammed the door behind him so many weary months ago. His face had a calmer, stronger appearance, and the lines, wrought by sorrow, gave his face a nobler look.

His manner was that of a man who is happy with a chastened joy. He had not forgotten his wife, but he had found delight in the possession of his son. He thanked her in his heart for having given the child to him.

It was very cold and Robert hailed a cab to take them to the theatre. Their appearance was hailed with acclamation by the assembled company, and the ladies took Bobbie away to give him goodies and otherwise spoil his appetite and disposition. Father and child were almost inseparable, and in the theatrical world they were acquiring such titles as "The Two Bobs."

Business began. Little Bob was placed in a corner and for the time his father forgot him. The manager had allowed some relations of the supernumeraries to be present in the auditorium, just as a treat for them and to avoid the rather depressing effect which an empty theatre would have on the actors at rehearsal.

At least, that was his explanation, but everybody understood that his good-nature prompted him to allow poor people to come in at times, out of the cold or wet, and he also gave them a coin as a souvenir.

Extraordinary conduct, as some persons said, but he was an extraordinary man altogether, which probably accounted for the position he had acquired.

In the midst of an important scene, Bobby became tired of inactivity and suddenly ran forward. At the same moment one of the actresses, in the performance of her part, rushed across the front of the stage.

There was a collision, immediately followed by a cry of fear and pain from the child and a general shout from the other members of the company. The two sounds drowned one more that was uttered at the moment by a woman standing in the theatre at the side. She sprang forward and scrambled to the stage.

"My boy, my Bobby," she screamed. "You have hurt him! It *is* my boy! Oh, let me come to him!"

She was a pitiful object, in rags and faint from exposure and want. She staggered forward, but the effort to get on the stage had exhausted her. She reeled, threw out her arms for support, and was caught by the author of the new piece.

"Thank Heaven!" he cried fervently, while the spectators looked with wide-opened eyes. "I have found her again!"

The sound of his voice sent a quiver through her frame. She opened her eyes to gaze at the face of her lost husband, and, seeing nothing but the deepest love and sympathy therein, she instinctively nestled nearer to his breast and wept tears of joy.

"Me, too!" said a child's voice.

And Bobby struggled to obtain a share of his father's embrace.

"We'll give up the rehearsal for to-day and take it up to-morrow at the same time!" whispered the kindly manager to the several members of the company. So they dispersed and left the stage to the chief actors in a drama of which they knew nothing.

B. E. Garden.

Maud: "What do you do when a man persists in asking for a dance, and you don't care to dance with him?" Marie: "Tell him my card is full." Maud: "But supposing it isn't, and he still persists?" Marie: "Then I insist that it is, and let him see that it isn't."

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A Deed = = Repaid.

A Story of a Girl's Choice and its Transfer.

PROLOGUE.

In the Teeth of the Storm.

It was late afternoon, and storm-clouds were scudding overhead, heralding a dark and premature night.

An hour before the blue waters of Crag Bay had smiled and danced beneath a still bluer sky. But a storm had risen, and the wind was now lashing the surface of the bay into foam-crested billows, above which the stinging spray flew and hissed in the teeth of the gale.

The tide was on the flow, and the storm increased as the torn and broken water poured in between the distant headlands. Outside, the deep boom of breakers told of a tossing, turbulent sea.

Presently the figure of a girl came into view, walking high up, along the narrow path which fringed the cliff over-looking the bay.

To walk there in such a storm was neither an easy nor a pleasant task, but Ida Sherwood loved nothing so well as to come here in the teeth of a storm and witness the grand but awful battle between wind and sea.

Slowly she traversed the narrow path, gazing out over the jagged, seething waters. Soon she came to the further side of the bay, where the water was dotted with huge black rocks.

When the sea was calm, it was easy to leap from rock to rock, but they were only approachable when the tide was low. A sheet of broken water now lay between the rocks and the shore, for the tide was on the flow.

Suddenly the girl stood still, and a little cry escaped her lips. Far out on the rocks, she saw a solitary figure, standing terror-stricken in the midst of the seething, storm-swept waters. Around him hissed the spray, lashing his white face with stinging salt drops.

Gazing helplessly shorewards, he caught sight of the girl, standing motionless on the edge of the cliff, and, with an imploring gesture, he lifted and waved a broken crutch, which he held in his hand.

It was now too dark and he was too far off for the girl to recognise him, but his signal of distress told her who he was. He was the cripple son of a fisherman in the village—a man of ill-repute, who was regarded, even by his drunken associates, as a man to be feared.

The boy, too, appeared to be following in his father's footsteps, in spite of the ill-usage to which the latter subjected him, for though he was as yet but ten years old, he had already found his way to the notice of the local police.

But these things—though not unknown to the girl—were considerations of small importance now. The boy was in peril of his life.

The cruel waves leapt around him in a veritable dance of death. She must save him! But how? He had wandered on to the rocks, and the rising tide had cut off his retreat.

Suddenly a thought came to the girl. There was but one way to save the lad.

To summon assistance would be fruitless, for the little village of Crag Bay lay two miles off. She looked below, and her eye rested on a small boat-house at the foot of the cliff. Her breath came quick as she realised the peril of the task before her. But her mind was made up.

Catching up her skirts, she descended the steep cliff by a rough, precipitous path used by the fisherfolk of the village, and, racing over the shingle beneath, reached the shed where the boat was kept.

With a strength born of desperation, she dragged the boat out on to the beach and ran it down to the water's edge.

The tide was higher now, and the foam-crested waves were sweeping over the rock upon which the trembling boy stood. One glance at those hungry black, froth-flecked fangs in the angry maw of the sea, and, with a quick, brief prayer for strength, she ran the boat out into the breakers and leapt within it.

A few strong strokes with the answering oars, and she was out among the leaping, foaming waves.

Time after time the oars were nearly torn from her grasp, but she still held on, keeping the head of the frail craft pointed out towards the line of black rocks and putting in a stroke or two wherever she could.

Slow—very slow—was the progress she made against storm and tide. The exhausted little figure on the rock was tottering now under the stress and fury of the gale, while the angry billows leapt up as if to clutch him and draw him into their embrace.

But nearer and nearer came the boat, until barely a dozen yards separated it from the white, scared figure in the midst of the seething waters. Close to him was a great rock, and under the lee of this she steered the tiny, tossing craft. Then, reaching out an oar to the terrified boy, she cried to him to jump.

Dropping his crutch into the boiling sea beneath, the boy sprang, with a terrified cry, across the narrow, gleaming strip of angry water separating him from his rescuer and sank in a heap into the bottom of the boat.

For a moment it rocked and swayed, while the girl caught her breath in fearful apprehension that the tiny craft would be engulfed. But soon that danger was over, and the girl exerted all her remaining strength to turn the boat's head in the direction of the shore.

There was no need to propel the frail craft now. High on their white crests, the roaring billows lifted it and swept it on. But the oars were now even more indispensable, for the boat's head must be kept towards the shore, or the girl well knew what would be the result.

Painfully she toiled, while the boat swept through the angry waters.

Nearer and nearer, skilfully handling her tiny craft and watching every opportunity, the girl gripped the bending oars and glanced momentarily backward at the oncoming billows. And then they rose high on the crest of a great

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wave, bounding forward like an arrow from a bow, till, falling once more, they heard the keel grate upon the shingle and knew that they were saved.

The Choice.

Ida Sherwood stood by the window of her little sitting-room at Crag Farm, and looked out over the soft green meadow-land beyond. But to-day the smiling landscape had but few attractions for her.

She was in some perplexity, as was evident by the puckering of the pretty brows and the impatient pouting of the ripe lips, for she knew that, ere long, she would be called upon to make a choice in which the most vital considerations were at stake.

For some time past two men had been paying her marked attention, and she knew sufficient of mankind to be aware that, in both cases, this would terminate in a proposal. She liked both men, but she loved neither—or, at least, she thought so.

There was no particular need for her to marry. Her father was a prosperous farmer, and not at all disposed to part with his beautiful and accomplished daughter.

Being free to follow her own sweet will, she had chosen literature as a vocation, and was already blossoming into a writer of some repute. But she held certain strong and vigorous opinions on the question of marriage, regarding it not only as a desirable but a necessary step, demanded of all true women.

So she had at last decided that she would give an affirmative reply to one of the two, when he should put his question. But which one? That was her present difficulty.

As she mused, a boy came past the window, and, seeing her within, held up a note which he carried in his hand. It was the cripple boy whom she had rescued from those cruel rocks two years before. He was twelve years old now, and a sharp, intelligent lad. People said he had changed for the better since Miss Sherwood had taken to noticing him.

She opened the window and the boy handed her the note. She unfolded it and read as follows:

"*I am sketching in Glen Wood by the brook. Shall be there till dusk. Can you run over some time during the day? Have an idea for a story which I think would admirably fit in with this lovely spot. Perhaps your quicker imagination could make something of it, and I might illustrate.* "Frank Desmond."

The girl considered for a moment.

"Are you going back?" she asked the boy.

"Yes, miss," was the reply.

"Very well," said Ida. "Tell Mr. Desmond I will try to be there by three this afternoon."

"I hope I'm doing the right thing," she said to herself as the boy moved away. "He has only been in the neighbourhood six months or so, but he is not a bad fellow, and—he is very handsome.

"Besides, his co-operation with me in my work is of more value to me than I care to confess. He is polished, too, and would appear to advantage in any society.

"Now, Rupert Woodville, on the other hand, is—— But he is a good fellow, too, and—and rather good-looking. But—but he's so quiet, and looks at one with those deep, earnest, steadfast eyes of his as though he would read one's inmost heart. Yes, Rupert Woodville is a man, every inch of him, but—but Frank Desmond is—a gentleman!"

She stopped and once more looked out through the open window.

"Yes," she said presently—"I think it will be Mr. Desmond. I know I do not love him in the least, but—but that may come later. At any rate, he is—a gentleman!"

And, having thus determined on her course of action, she dismissed the subject from her mind until the afternoon.

The shade was deliciously cool beneath the overhanging trees when she stood at last by the brook in Glen Wood. Frank Desmond had left his easel, and was stretched on the soft green sward.

At the sound of Ida's footstep, he leapt to his feet and greeted her with unmistakable tenderness. She stepped up to the easel and examined the picture upon which he had been engaged.

As she looked, an admiring light flashed into her lovely face, which the artist at her side was not slow to notice. And then they sat down on a fallen log and began to converse upon subjects interesting to them both—of literature and art—until Frank Desmond, having thus skilfully yet unobtrusively shown the always enthusiastic girl at his side how many and varied were the interests they had in common, led up to the great question which had inspired him to seek a meeting with her in the woods—not of a prospective story, but of his love.

There was something that jarred upon the girl as she listened—something she could not explain or understand—but she had already made her choice, and, when at last she left the soft shade of Glen Wood, she had promised to become Frank Desmond's wife.

The shadows were lengthening as she neared Crag Farm on her return home. She had reached the last field, and stood leaning against a stile, lost in thought. So occupied was she, indeed, that she was unaware of the presence of a tall figure standing at her side, till a voice said:

"Good afternoon, Miss Sherwood. You are wise in preferring the air out of doors to the house this hot day."

Ida started and looked up. Dr. Rupert Woodville—a tall, handsome man of thirty—was looking down at her with deep, earnest eyes. In spite of herself, the girl coloured.

"Yes," she said, trying to retain her self-possession—"is it not beautiful? It makes one glad only to know one is alive!"

Rupert Woodville smiled. His smile was wondrously winning and made his handsome face still more attractive.

"That is the voice of a perfect constitution," he said.

Ida smiled and turned her face towards Crag Farm.

"You are on your way home?" said the doctor. "I wonder if you will be so good as to give me a cup of tea?"

Ida could not restrain a feeling of vexation, yet she could do nothing else but respond: "With pleasure, Dr. Woodville!" and together they walked along the narrow path through the smiling meadow towards the farm.

The cup of tea was very fragrant, and the girl who presided over the little tea-table looked sweet and dainty.

Rupert Woodville forgot his former statement that the air out of doors was preferable to the house, and lingered long after the evening shadows had stolen over meadowland and orchard. He could talk well, and his words were well worth listening to.

He was not so brilliant, perhaps, as Frank Desmond, for he was not a genius, but he possessed that strong undercurrent of shrewd common-sense which gave point to his remarks.

So topic after topic came up for discussion, till at last, tempted by the fact that they two were alone in the little sitting-room, Rupert Woodville entered upon more delicate ground, treading lightly, as if he feared to startle the girl whom he loved. But

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in a flash she read his intention, and her sense of honour bade her speak.

"Dr. Woodville," she said, "I have a little piece of news which, though as yet unknown, will soon be common property. Mr. Desmond has to-day asked me to be his wife, and—and I have accepted."

There was a dead silence in the little room for a minute or two, and then the doctor said in a low voice:

"Miss Sherwood, no one deserves more than you do to be happy. I earnestly hope you may be."

There was so much earnestness in the words that they fell on Ida's ears almost like a prayer, and the girl was touched. She held out her hand impulsively, and it was held in a strong, firm grasp.

Then the doctor rose, and with a quiet, courteous farewell, took his departure. But it was with a very grave and troubled face that he went his way homewards across the dark fields, while Ida, sitting still where he had left her, murmured softly to herself:

"I believe he is a gentleman, too!"

The Transfer.

It was a month later, and the soft green meadows of Crag Farm gleamed beneath the silver rays of a harvest moon.

The day had been excessively hot, and, though the hour was now late and the twinkling farm-lights had one by one been extinguished, Ida Sherwood still sat at her casement window, and looked far out over the moonlit landscape.

She had attired herself in soft white dressing-gown and slippers, and the cool, fragrant air, wafted over blossoming flowers and ripe corn, fanned her cheeks and soft white throat with its perfumed breath.

The month had brought many disquieting reflections. A vague foreboding that Frank Desmond was not quite what she had believed him rose repeatedly in her breast, and though she resolutely thrust it from her on each occasion, it returned anew to fill her heart with vague unrest.

Musing thus, she became aware of a figure hastening through the moonlight in the direction of the farm. A moment later, and she recognised him as the boy she had rescued on the rocks of Crag Bay.

A vague sense of uneasiness took hold of the girl's mind as she watched the now rapidly advancing figure. Something must be wrong, she argued, or he would not come so quickly, for she was well aware that so much effort involved no small pain to the little cripple.

Rapidly descending the stairs to the hall beneath, she unfastened the door and waited for him to come up. At last he reached her, and, sinking breathlessly down on the white stone step, said in quick, terrified, gasping words:

"Go to—boat-house—on the beach—you know—where you got—the boat—to save me! Go now—or be too late! There's danger—Mr. Desmond—I can't tell you—I shall be killed if I'm caught! Be quick!" And he went off at a great pace over the moonlit meadows.

For a moment the girl stood petrified. Then, without waiting to think what she was doing, she ran breathlessly up the dark stairs, exchanged her slippers for stout walking-boots, and, waiting to do no more than cover her dressing-gown with a long, dark, waterproof cloak, she darted out of the silent house and was soon speeding down the path from the cliff to the beach.

All was quiet when she reached the boat-house, and she stood leaning against the dark cliff, where the shadows were deepest, and waited.

Presently she heard a step close at hand and, peering out, saw a man approaching, whom she immediately recognised as Frank Desmond.

She was just about to spring forward from the shadow of the cliff and tell him of the strange message she had received, when another footstep sounded on the shingle, and the tall figure of Rupert Woodville reached his side.

"Well?" said Dr. Woodville sharply. "You sent for me, and I am here. Now, what is it you want?"

"My purpose in bringing you so far from home," replied Frank Desmond, "is to tell you, plainly and emphatically, that the conditions contained in your letter of to-day are quite impossible. I shall *not* leave Crag Bay, either for you or anyone else, and I shall *not* give up Miss Ida Sherwood!"

"Pardon me," said Rupert, with quiet emphasis, "but you overlook one thing. If you do not readily undertake to do both thsese things, I shall feel it my duty to disclose one or two facts which have come to my knowledge in regard to your former career, in which case both conditions will be forced upon you."

"You dare not!" said Frank Desmond.

"And pray why not?" asked Rupert Woodville with a smile.

"Because," retorted the other pointedly, "you would not only not be believed by the person most concerned, but your motive in making the disclosure would be interpreted by that same young lady in a manner scarcely likely to raise you in her estimation."

Dr. Woodville's face flushed angrily, but he controlled himself with an effort.

"I shall chance that," he said quietly.

For a moment or two they stood gazing straight into each other's eyes.

"Look here," said Frank Desmond at last, "I do not want to kick up a fuss. You have no right to interfere with my plans, but I will make one concession. If you will promise to keep your information to yourself, I, on my part, will promise not to marry Ida Sherwood until my wife is dead."

The shrinking girl in the dark shadow of the cliff caught her breath and drew still farther back.

"You hound!" said Rupert Woodville sternly. "Do you think I would consent to such a fiendish proposal!" And his strong hands clenched in sudden and overpowering anger.

"It is only a question of time!" continued the other coolly. "She can't live much longer. She bored me to death with her ailments before I left her. But they are real enough, poor wretch, and the end can't be far off. And then there will be no legal obstruction to my marriage with the lovely Ida——"

With an angry cry, Dr. Woodville leapt close in front of his opponent.

"Stop!" he cried, "or, by Heaven, if you use that name again, I will strike you to the earth!"

For a moment, Frank Desmond cowered before the tall, threatening figure, and then, once more mastering himself, he said coolly:

"So you reject my proposition?"

"With the scorn it deserves!" replied Rupert Woodville. "From such a consummate scoundrel as yourself no proposal could for a moment be entertained by a man of honour and integrity."

"Then take the consequences!" exclaimed Frank Desmond hoarsely; and, drawing from his pocket a whistle, he blew it shrilly three times.

Instantly a man darted out from the shadow of the boat-house where he had stood concealed, and, assisted by Frank Desmond, threw himself upon the unsuspecting doctor.

Rupert Woodville made a brave fight, struggling desperately with his two assailants, but the odds were against him, and he was soon thrown down and pinioned. Then Frank Desmond pointed to the boat-house

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"Get out the boat," he said excitedly, "and use that little auger of yours on the bottom. Dead men tell no tales, and the water of the bay is deep."

Without a word the man rushed to the shed and drew from it the boat in which, two years before, Ida Sherwood had saved the life of the little cripple. But now it was to be the means of death, and not of rescue.

The girl, terrified and bewildered, heard the sharp rasp of the auger as it cut its way through the bottom of the boat, and then, with a wild, inarticulate cry, she bounded from the shadow of the cliff and stood in the broad moonlight, confronting the two villains.

In her haste and agitation the dark cloak had slipped from her shoulders and she now stood, a dazzling, white-robed figure, with the moonlight shining about her with an almost unearthly radiance.

The man at the boat, with the credulity of the ignorant fisher-folk in the supernatural, uttered a terrified cry, and, letting fall his auger, rushed off over the hard shingle and disappeared into the darkness.

Then the girl turned to Frank Desmond, who stood sullenly watching her, and pointed with her finger up the narrow path which led to the top of the cliff.

"Go!" she said imperiously. And he, overawed by her presence and muttering an oath, slunk away in the direction she indicated.

Quickly she knelt down by the prostrate figure lying at her feet, and, with trembling fingers, cut the thongs that bound his arms and feet, while little suppressed sobs rose in her throat and choked her.

In a moment Rupert Woodville leapt to his feet and, picking up the cloak which his eyes alone had noticed, put it tenderly about the girl's shoulders.

"Miss Sherwood," he said softly, "you have saved my life!"

"Don't!" she said brokenly. "Thank God it is not too late to retract! Oh, whom *is* one to believe?"

"Try me," said Rupert softly. "I have loved you for years, dear, and can know no happiness apart from you."

The girl looked up shyly into his handsome face.

"I think," she said softly, "it is you I have loved all along, only I did not know it."

And so they went back to the quiet little village, happy, trusting and silent, for love needs no words to manifest its presence.

It was not till later that Ida learnt to what happy circumstance she owed the information which had led her to Crag Bay that never-to-be-forgotten night.

Rupert Woodville, discovering almost by accident the character of the man to whom Ida Sherwood had promised her hand, had written him a stern letter, demanding his immediate disappearance from the village and his complete surrender of that lady's favour.

Frank Desmond determined to brook no such interference in his plans and ready to perpetrate any crime to compass his end, sought out the father of the cripple, and, with his assistance and co-operation, formed the plan which had so nearly succeeded.

But the little cripple had overheard the foul plot and, vaguely conscious that it in some way menaced the girl who had saved his life two years before on those terrible black rocks in Crag Bay, had, at the peril of his own life, rushed off to acquaint her with the news.

And thus he repaid the deed of heroism which had snatched him from a cruel death—a deed which, in all his after life, he never forgot.

Walter J. Mowbray.

A Borrowed Fame.

Which Brought Happiness to Three People.

"Never mind, Nannie, dear, perhaps something will turn up soon. I haven't heard yet about that last story I sent to the *Screecher*, they may take it, 'you never know your luck!'" the speaker finished cheerily, though with a half-smothered sob behind her optimistic speech.

"Poor Nora!" said the sick girl, turning a loving look upon her companion, "always so hopeful and so brave. If I were only not like a stone tied round your neck, dear, lying helpless here——"

"A stone round my neck!" cried Nora, going down upon her knees beside her sister's couch, "my greatest blessing, you mean! Why, whatever should I do without you? But let us cheer up, Nannie, my screw for teaching that little fiend of a Harper boy must be due next week, and I have a little money to go on with. If only I could get something to do in the afternoons or evenings, though I should hate leaving you alone, dear," she said, turning involuntarily to her invalid sister.

"Oh, that wouldn't matter, I have my crochet, you know! It's the only way I can make a few pence," the other said wearily.

"We won't talk any more about money," Nora said cheerfully, as she kissed her sister and rose from her knees. "I spent a whole penny on a *Daily Telegraph* to-day, so as to look at the advertisements, so here goes!" and she unfolded the paper. "This is handsome, isn't it?" and she read aloud—

"Young lady, not over twenty-five, offered comfortable home in high-class family, in return for taking entire charge of three children."

"Humph! I'd rather be the scullery maid at twelve pounds a year, she would at least have her evenings out, and something to dress on! Nursery governess—companion for elderly lady," she continued. "Here, Nannie, here is something for me," and she read excitedly—

"Lady typist wanted from three till seven daily, usual terms, apply three to-day, G.C., 15, Paper Court, W.C."

"Where is my hat? Where are my gloves?" she exclaimed. "Nannie, are you sitting on them?"

"My dear Nora," said her sister more calmly, "you have had no lunch, you mustn't go away hungry!"

"Oh, that doesn't matter!" said Nora, as she hurriedly put on her hat. "If I get the post I'll have a double tea afterwards. There's the postman!" as a knock was heard. "I'll just run and see what it is!"

She came back looking rather crestfallen, with the familiar long envelope in her hand.

"My story back from the *Screecher*," she said a little bitterly, "I suppose they haven't even read it, for I only sent it yesterday. Well, better luck next time!" she said, trying to smile as she threw the despised M.S. on the desk.

"Oh, poor Nora!" said Nannie sympathetically.

"Never mind, dear, luck must turn some day, but it is hard lines to get my 'Grip of Iron' back, for I know it isn't half bad. Never mind Nankin Blue, I must be off, ta-ta!" and with that she flew down the long staircase.

"Poor Nora!" said Nannie Nugent, brushing away a

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tear, "with all her spirit and her hope, what is to become of us? What is to become of us?" and she rocked herself to and fro.

Until six months ago the Nugent girls were dependent on an uncle. A year before he had seen fit to take unto himself a wife, who much objected to the encumbrance of what she called "two able-bodied women," quite ignoring the fact that Nannie, the elder, had been an invalid almost from birth, and for the last five years quite confined to the sofa.

Nora bore the bride's reproaches and sneers for a year, when she suddenly made up her mind to cut the matter short by deciding that she and her sister should come up to London—that grave of many vanished hopes—and search "for something to do," the vague "will o' the wisp" which has lured so many souls to destruction.

The girls had a tiny income from a small legacy left them by their grandmother, and, so far, had managed to rub along, their only outside means of subsistence being a miserable pittance Nora earned by daily teaching, and what Nannie could make by her beautiful work.

Nora's heart beat high as she ran up the narrow, dirty staircase which she was told led to "the advertisement."

On the landing outside the door were four or five persons of various ages, with clothes in various stages of decomposition.

One elderly woman, with straggling grey hair, leant wearily against the stair-rails; another, even more anxious-looking, had seated herself on a broken box outside the door, while in a corner two or three of the class known as "shop-girl," laughed and giggled together.

"'E don't mind keeping ladies waiting," said one of these, as Nora arrived on the scene, "'ere's another," she continued in a whisper, "looks a toff, don't she?"

At this moment a noise was heard upon the staircase, and a head appeared upon the landing below.

"Good Heavens!" said a man's voice, "there's a crowd there!" as he looked up and saw the response his single advertisement had brought forth.

"Sorry to keep you waiting, ladies," he continued, as he unlocked his office-door. "Now, how shall I interview you? Perhaps you will come first?" he said politely to Nora, after a hurried glance at the other applicants.

"It's a shime!" the giggling girls said, as the door was shut. "And 'er the last to come. That shows what a cheeky face and a smart 'at will do!"

"Bless you!" replied her companions, "we all know what that means! For my part I'm off to pastures new. Come along, Liz—'urry up, Bess, I'm 'alf frozen waiting here," and they ran downstairs arm in arm, singing loudly as they went out of the door.

The two elderly women left looked at each other with mutual pity in their eyes.

"We can't stand against the young," said the one with the grey hair streaked over her forehead, as she turned sadly and went downstairs.

The other waited a minute or two, there came a laugh from within, and a man's voice said—

"Very well then, Miss Nugent, that is settled!" The woman rose wearily from the broken box, and turned to go.

* * *

"Now, Miss Nugent," said Geoffrey Churnside, cheerfully, as he hung up his coat and hat, "we'll have a good long evening's work at the novel. These miserable 'pot boilers' have kept me back half the week, I only sent Jones half that story for next month's *Rambler*, but if he wants the rest, he is to let me know to-morrow, and it will have to be done somehow.

"I generally finish these odd things Saturdays and Sundays, and devote the serious part of the week to the novel. By Jove, it is cold, isn't it? I think we'll have some more coals on, eh?" he said, as he heaped up the fireplace.

Nora shivered slightly, this unexpected spell of cold weather came hard on people who had a very meagre supply of winter clothing.

Mrs. Harper had failed to pay the quarterly instalment of what she called "the governess' wages," and the money in her sister's exchequer was very low.

Nannie had tried to smile brightly, and say she didn't feel at all cold, as she covered up her feet with a well-worn rug, and declared it was no use lighting the fire until Nora came back, "it was such a bother to keep up," all the time conscious that only a decent sized shovel of coals was between them and freezing point.

"Yes, it is cold," said Nora, becoming acutely conscious that she had eaten nothing since her early breakfast of tea and bread and butter.

"You look wretchedly cold, are you ill, Miss Nugent?" and, as Geoffrey looked at her, he became conscious of a sudden feeling of interest in this typewriter girl, whom he had hitherto looked upon as only a part of his machine.

"No," said Nora laughing, as she imagined, cheerily, "I can't afford to be ill."

"Hard lines, isn't it?" said Geoffrey, "but I say," he continued, looking at her again, "are you sure you take enough care of yourself? Isn't this rather thin for a day like to-day?" he said gingerly, touching the well worn black cape which was Nora's sole outer covering, "and are you sure—women are so careless about that sort of thing"—he said apologetically, "are you sure you have had a good lunch to-day?

"Forgive me if I seem impertinent, but I know the sort of thing—bread and butter"—or without the butter, Nora thought—"water, tapioca, that is what my sisters used to be so fond of, but in London, you know, one must eat well. Now, what you want, is a good strong beefsteak. Will you do what I ask you?" he said more gently.

"What is it? I think we are wasting time, Mr. Churnside, we had better get to work," she answered.

"Come down with me to the restaurant round the corner, and have some lunch—to please me—now do?" he pleaded.

Poor Nora's eyes were swimming in tears—half from hunger, half from gratitude for the unaccustomed care lavished upon her.

During the intervals of devouring lunch she told him some of her troubles, of Nan's weakness, her own inability to keep the wolf from the door.

"Sounds like the tale of a budding novelist," said Churnside. "I've been hungry myself before now. You ought to take to writing, Miss Nugent."

"I do write," she replied timidly, the hot blood mounting up in her cheeks.

"Oh, you do, do you?" the man replied, half amused. "For fashion papers, and that sort of thing, I suppose?"

"No," said Nora indignantly, "not at all, I write stories!"

"But," he continued more kindly, "you haven't had much luck yet, perhaps?"

"None," she replied, with great emphasis, and a certain bitterness.

"Dear, dear," he said sympathetically, "but luck will turn, you know, it does for us all some day. Bring me some of your work to-morrow, I will have a look at it. Now we must go back to the novel."

Nora built a good many aerial castles on the foundation of the hope his words had opened out to her, and it was no small disappointment next day when he seemed to have

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as utterly forgotten the conversation—as if it had never been uttered.

She had brought the "Grip of Iron" neatly tied up in a parcel in her muff, but the whole conversation seemed to have slipped from Mr. Churnside's memory, and her typewriter had to fly more quickly than usual, to complete the requisite number of pages, as her employer was obliged to go out early, on account of an appointment.

He was in such a hurry, he hardly waited to say good-bye, and Nora felt a curious feeling of desolation, as she was left alone with the neatly-typed sheets before her, instead of the exultation which would have been hers a week ago, on knowing that she was free to return to Nannie an hour earlier than usual.

She had not hurried to put on her cloak, and as she at last rose to do so, heard a step ascending the stairs.

The postman's double-knock meant a parcel, and she hastened to bring it in. The printed label on the packet showed that it was from the *Rambler* office.

"They may want the rest of it typed—I had better open it and see, I could do it at home for him, if they are in a hurry," she said aloud.

To her astonishment, instead of proof-sheets, an unused MS. was disclosed as she unfolded the paper. A note lay on the top; which read as follows:

"Dear Churnside.—*This is not quite up to your usual, and after some hesitation, we have decided not to use it. Can't you send us something in one number, more in the style of the last you sent. Please let us know at once, if you have anything suitable ready, and if so please send to-night. I will forward cheque on receipt.*"

Nora felt like a condemned criminal, as she stood with the letter in her hand.

"I oughtn't to have opened it," she said, "but"—then her eyes fell upon the parcel in her muff, in which "the Grip of Iron" lay concealed.

"Why shouldn't I?" she said, "I'll tell him afterwards, it may be mean—but, oh! if it brought in some money!"

In a moment the deed was done—she had typed a short note saying that "Mr. Churnside inclosed a new and original story, which he hoped would be suitable for the *Rambler*."

Nora thrust the rejected MS. into an unused drawer, and walked home, feeling more miserable than she had ever done in her life.

* * * * *

"Can you explain this, Miss Nugent?" said Churnside, two mornings later, as Nora arrived upon the scene.

All the day before she had tried to pluck up courage to tell him what she knew—sooner or later he must inevitably find out—but the words seemed to stick in her throat as she tried to utter them. Now she felt instinctively that crime was discovered, and the terror of the honest wrong-doer took hold of her.

"Do you remember," continued Churnside, "what I called that story of which I sent the first part to the *Rambler*? I thought it was 'Romance of a Summer,' or something like that, but they must have muddled me up with somebody else, for they call it 'A Grip of Iron!' They're mighty complimentary, too, I must say," he added. "Listen:

"Dear Sir,—*We have read with attention your short story, and think it the best thing we have hitherto had from you. Send us as much as you like of the same sort, and we can guarantee insertion.*

"*You will notice cheque inclosed is at an increased rate of remuneration, and we consider 'The Grip of Iron' worth it.*"

"Now, did you ever hear anything like that?" he concluded in a puzzled voice; "very nice if I deserved it, but I never wrote the thing in my life!"

Nora's face had turned to a ghastly pallor as he read, while her eyes glittered as she saw the amount on the open cheque he held in his hand.

"Mr. Churnside," she began, and with speech greater strength came to her—"I have a confession to make to you. The *Rambler* sent back the part of the story you had sent to them, they—they said it was not very good—not suitable, I mean," she hastened to add—"they wanted a story complete in one issue—I had brought down the MS. of a story I had written to show you—you remember, you asked me to do so?" and she gained courage to look at him.

Churnside merely bowed his head.

"You had evidently forgotten all about having done so," she continued timidly, "but I had the MS. with me, and the temptation was too great. I sent it to the *Rambler* as if from you. Believe me," she implored, "I did not mean to do you harm—I only wished to insure that my story would have the justice of being read. They say beginners' work is never read—I did not mean to hurt your reputation—indeed, indeed I did not."

"Seems to me you have increased it," Churnside said rather bitterly. Did it never occur to you, Miss Nugent, that you were doing a dishonourable thing in opening my letters, and a dishonest one in using my name?"

"I opened the letter with no dishonourable intention," she answered indignantly. "you left early on that day, and you had told me they might want the second instalment of your story in a hurry—so I opened it to see, and meant to leave a note for you, saying I could either return to type it that night, or do it at home, if you sent me the rough copy.

"I was very wrong in what I did, and I am sorry, but if you think me dishonest, I had better go"—and she turned towards the door.

"Stop a minute," said Churnside, as he fingered the cheque. "This is yours, I had better sign it in your favour, and then you can cash it. I shall write to the *Rambler* and explain—as they think so highly of your work, they will probably take more of it—but of course you understand, I cannot run the risk of your opening any more of my letters."

"You mean," said Nora, as she turned and indignantly faced him, "that you dismiss me from your service? I think I told you, I was going, without waiting to be dismissed—but listen one moment," she cried passionately, "before you send me away in disgrace. I have not stolen your money.

"Much as I require it, I would rather not take the cheque. I did not mean to steal your reputation—I only wished to insure my tale being read—for I felt it had grit in it—I have made a dreadful mistake, and I am sorry, but you don't know—you don't know what it is to be starving like we are.

"The lunch you gave me on Wednesday was the first meat I had tasted for weeks; we have no fire in this bitter cold weather—and I am trusting to what you owe me to meet the rent of our poor little room.

"My other employer has not paid me yet for teaching her wicked little boy—because she says the arrangement is to pay half-yearly, and I don't know what to do—I don't know what to do," she wailed, as she burst into tears. "I don't mind for myself, but for my sister, I would work myself to death for her—but it's no use—it's no use," and she sobbed bitterly.

Churnside's heart began to smite him, as he heard the piteous tale, and saw her bitter distress.

"By Jove, what a pretty little head she has," he thought, as he stood helplessly looking at her.

In a few minutes the sobs ceased, and she again rose to go. Quickly he stepped between her and the door.

"Miss Nugent, will you forgive me?" he said gently, "I was a brute, I confess I was angry and jealous of your being able to write better than I could—and I lost my temper. Here, take the cheque—it is you who have earned it—buy what you need, and come back to-morrow at the usual time."

* * * * *

The novel of the year—some two years later—was said to be one by the joint authors, "G. G. and N. Churnside," but Geoffrey always says he owes the greater part of the fame he now enjoys to his clever and original wife.

Kitty Smart.

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LOVE *versus* MONEY.

The Romance of a Rich Man's Wooing.

I AM a very rich man—not quite a millionaire, but rich enough to be able to get anything that money can buy. One thing I desired, that was love—love for myself alone, not for my riches.

My wealth brought me in contact with many women; in fact, threw women in my way. How, then, was I to tell whether they would have sought me for myself—for my own worth?

I saw every day the fairest, most amiable girls, girls possessing even to me every charm and virtue but one, and that one was that they would marry without a blush men to whom I knew their hands and not their hearts were given. I longed inexpressibly for love, the disinterested love of a woman, and felt I could have sacrificed my all for it, for her.

Why not? I asked myself. It was easy—at any rate for the time being, I would live poorly, humbly; I would earn my own living. I would stand on my own merits, and see what came of it. Not here, that would be difficult, but in a big town where no one would know me, nor smile at and excuse me as eccentric.

A week later I had installed myself as one of the salesmen at the silk counter of a large and flourishing firm. There were a number of girls employed in the establishment, and I remarked them closely.

They were all affable and obliging, and some of them were pretty and unaffected too, but I did not find my fate among them, and two or three weeks later I had begun to be disheartened with my model mode of life when an incident occurred that served to bind me to my resolve more firmly than ever.

It was a wet day and business was rather slack, when I noticed come into the shop a girl who instantly riveted my attention. It was not that she was beautiful, or in any way striking looking, but she was pretty and charming, and her whole bearing was graceful in the extreme, and at a glance she became possessed of that nameless attraction for me which is termed love at first sight.

How I hoped that her shopping would bring her to my counter, and that it would fall to my lot to serve her with silk or satin. Yes, that was evidently what she had come to buy, for now the shop-walker was conducting her towards me, and another minute she had seated herself in a chair opposite me.

As I asked, "What is your pleasure, madam," the customary formula did not sound so trite to me as usual, and seemed even to have become endowed with a subtle meaning of its own.

"I want to look at white silks and satins," she said, "something suitable for a ball dress."

I brought out all my choicest goods and spread them before her; she selected the very one I would have chosen for her myself—a rich, soft satin, that was worth every penny of the rather high figure at which it was priced, but when I reckoned it up and told her what the whole dress length would come to, she put it aside and said she was afraid it was too expensive.

She looked very disappointed as she began to make a second choice, remarking that she did not like the other fabrics nearly as well, and I thought it was a great shame if she should have to forego her fancy for the sake of a few pounds.

I was so madly in love with her already that I was only dying to gratify her every wish, and a hasty plan came into my head by which she might have the satin, and yet no one be a bit the wiser.

I appeared to reflect.

"If you will allow me to remove these, madam," I said, gathering together the pile of silks, not forgetting the precious satin, "I think I remember to have a dress length very similar to the one you have chosen, marked at half price, owing to a slight damage; but it is so very slight that I am sure it would not interfere with the making up in the least. I will show it to you."

I retired with my armful of silks in great excitement at my ruse, and presently returned with the identical piece of satin, which I had now metamorphosed by various snips of the scissors along the edge, added to one or two dusty finger marks in the middle.

She looked at it carefully.

"It really seems quite as nice as the one you just showed me," she exclaimed in delight.

"It is absolutely the same thing," I said, preserving my countenance, "going at half price because of the damage, and it's only just at this end too. You won't lose half a yard by it in the whole piece."

"I think I'll decide on taking it," she said. "Thank you very much; that is all I require to-day. Will you please send it to Miss Lily Grahame, Ashburnham Grange."

I made out the bill, and after a moment's mental arithmetic announced, "That will be £3 17s. 6d. if you please." But needless to say I settled it at the desk for twice that sum.

"I'll let you have the bill with the parcel," I said guilefully, as I counted out her change, for it is scarcely necessary to add that I meant to take particular care *not* to inclose it at all.

"Yes, that will do nicely, thank you," she said. "Good morning."

"Good morning," I responded, trying to reconcile myself to her departure.

It came on to rain heavily after she had gone, but the rest of the day was sufficiently bright for me. I had got her name and address too, and though I did not know either, I trusted I should soon find someone who did. I wondered for what ball she was buying her dress, and wished I knew, so that I might also, by hook or by crook, get an invitation.

In my spare hours I took to haunting the road in which she lived, but I never by any chance saw her, and two or three weeks passed; but whatever purchases she found necessary to make, at least they did not bring her to my counter.

I began to despair, when one afternoon I had occasion to pass through the flowers and feathers department, and saw her with an elderly lady, whose attention seemed to be wholly given to a box of roses of every shade and colour that was being displayed to her.

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I loitered behind a corner that I might watch the girl I loved, and I heard the lady with her say, "None of these are quite what I want, can you show me something else?"

"Certainly, madam," answered the assistant, and she mounted a short pair of steps to reach down some more boxes.

It was not a dangerous position if she had taken ordinary care, but somehow the steps slipped, and she reached out desperately to save herself, and a whole shower of heavy boxes came tumbling down with her. She was herself unhurt, but in her fall she carried Miss Grahame to the ground also.

Fortunately I saw the boxes coming, and was there to spring to the rescue of my love, but even then I was not quite in time to save her wholly; one of the heavy boxes had struck her on the temple, and she lay motionless on the ground.

I raised her in my arms, and sought to reassure the trembling old lady with her.

"She is only stunned," I said. "See, she begins to open her eyes already."

And, sure enough, before the distracted shop-girl who had caused the accident, returned with restoratives, Miss Grahame had opened her eyes to look into mine, and find me bending over her, while her head still nestled unconsciously against my shoulder.

"Where am I? What has happened?" she asked, struggling up.

I guided her to a chair, but insisted on still supporting her as between us we applied the restoratives, and presently she began somewhat indignantly to repudiate our ministrations.

"Come, let us go home," she said. "I am quite able to, now."

"Do you really feel better?" asked the lady with her. "There is quite a bruise on your forehead. Now, I do hope it will be well for Lady Brancepeth's ball next week."

"Oh, yes, I'm sure it will!" said Miss Grahame hastily. "I feel all right now. Thank you so much," she added, turning to the shop girl, who stood somewhat tearfully at her side.

The other lady looked severely in her direction.

"It has been a very narrow escape," she said, "and if it had not been for this young man's providential presence of mind, such carelessness might have had very serious results. My dear," she continued, turning to Miss Grahame, "this young man has saved you from a very nasty accident, and been most helpful too. We shall not forget you," she added condescendingly to me.

Miss Grahame looked at me and blushed, and I felt like blushing too.

"I'm sure I ought to thank you very much," she said, in an embarrassed but wholly charming manner, while, as for me, I was so overcome by this direct speech and look from her that I could only bow awkwardly, and disclaim having rendered any service that called for thanks.

I escorted them to their carriage, and, as they drove away I distinctly heard the old lady remark—

"A very gentlemanly young man, my dear, quite a superior person!"

Then the irony of the situation struck me, and I could not help laughing as I returned to my duties. Well, I could afford to laugh, for I knew at least one ball that my divinity would grace, and that was Lady Brancepeth's.

She was an old friend of my mother's when they were girls together, and I felt sure if I ran through my correspondence of a month back I should find her invitation among others, if not already destroyed.

I soon discovered it, and lost no time in resigning my position on the staff of Messrs. Price and Hunter's establishment, as I felt that that episode in my life had served its turn.

I awaited the night of the Brancepeth ball with impatience, and over and over again I wondered how she would receive me.

When I reached Lady Brancepeth's, and saw her surrounded by admirers, men of every grade and fortune, my determination to be loved for myself alone, wavered.

I felt that to win her I could even stoop to use my wealth as a lever, even if needs be myself come to play the *rôle* of unloved bridegroom.

When Guy Brancepeth, my college chum, came up to me and patted me on the back, and asked, "Don't you want an introduction to the belle of the ball?" indicating Miss Grahame, glorious in the white satin I had sold her, my feelings had become very mixed indeed, and I was almost incapable of speech when, without waiting for my answer, I found he had transported me to her presence, and pronounced the mystic formula over us which culminates in orthodox acquaintance.

Yes, she recognised me, there was no doubt about that, but if she felt surprise or annoyance she concealed them both admirably. I could almost have thought that pleasure lurked in her greeting to me.

She spared me more than one dance on her programme, and, when she was whirled away from me by an eager partner, I felt that I could not rest after to-night without knowing my fate.

I knew I risked much by putting it to the test so soon, but I was longing to stand well in her eyes, to clear myself from a false position, to prove that I had something to give as well as ask.

"Would you?" I asked, when, in the course of the evening, I had succeeded in getting her to myself in a quiet corner, "marry for love or money?"

"They never go together, do they?" she said, with a little catch in her voice, "It's bound to be a choice nowadays, isn't it?"

"But that's begging the question," I said.

"The question?" she said absently. "Oh, well, of course, I'd marry for love if I had the choice, but I haven't, you see!"

My heart sank. Was she too, like all the rest?

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Oh, well, you see," she said carelessly. "I've no money, not a penny in the world. I live with my aunt, but I'm really only a sort of paid companion to her. Would you not change all that for love, money, and independence?"

"Then," I said, "you love the man?"

She laughed merrily.

"No. I don't love the man."

I was dumfounded.

"But you are going to marry him?"

"I suppose so. I don't know!"

"And you," I said sternly, "can tell me this after having just owned that of your own choice you would marry for love rather than money."

"Yes, but then I never had the choice," she said, innocently, "because I never loved anyone till now."

Her words were calculated to dash my last hope to the ground. "She loves, she is loved," I said to myself, "she is not for me!" Filled with despair I raised my eyes to look at her. Her own were downcast, and her face covered in burning blushes.

In a moment I ventured to put a new interpretation on her words. Her blush proclaimed them unguarded.

"Could you love me?" I asked softly, bending towards her.

The sweet lips trembled. I tried to catch their answer, but it was sufficient that they granted me unresistingly a lover's privilege.

"And you won't mind," I asked presently, "if I am poor?"

"No," she said, nestling against me, "and some day you shall have a shop of your own, and I'll trim the hats."

I laughed outright, she was such a child.

"But what would you say," I asked, "if I could buy the shop already?"

She clapped her hands.

"Oh, but could you? Could you?"

I smiled.

"I think I may say I could buy you the inside of any shod you like, and not of one shop, but a hundred. And," I said gaily, "we don't buy shops with kisses, you know, but with money—pounds, shillings and pence. Although sometimes," I added slyly, "you may get a length of satin for love."

And after that speech, naturally, I was called upon to explain myself.

Ellice Beere.

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GREAT NEW SERIES.

Confessions of a Self-made Girl

The writer of these Confessions relates in this series of articles the true story of her life, from the time when she left Cornwall, an unsophisticated but ambitious girl, until she made her name and fortune. Her name is well known to you.

[*For the purposes of these Confessions I am calling myself Maud Cardew, as my real name is too well known for me to wish to make the story of my life public in this manner.*]

The Principals in the Story.

MAUD CARDEW.—The self-made girl.

HON. ROBERT LESTRANGE. (Commonly known as Bobbie.)
REGINALD (DI) NORTHCOTE.
} Men who had helped her to come to London and befriended her on her arrival.

MY SUCCESS AS AN ACTRESS.

Twenty-four hours of the most intolerable nervousness is what I think I remember most about the First Night of the new play. It was a time in which I could neither sit nor stand, run nor walk, eat nor sleep—I was almost paralysed with dread.

"What if I fail?"—I kept asking myself. "What if I fail?"

It was my chance—I knew that well—a chance that would perhaps never come again. *I must succeed.*

Yet the nervousness grew upon me, and at last in desperation I wired for Bobbie. When he arrived he asked me what on earth was the matter.

"You look like a boiled owl," he said; "with its head on the wrong way."

I explained to him my hopeless condition, and, instead of being in the least concerned, he threw back his head and laughed boisterously.

"Oh, this is highly interesting!" he said. "The *prima donna* struck by stage fright, and the kneeling multitudes waiting anxiously. Don't be a little fool, Queenie! Why, you can't fail! If ever success were certain, yours is. I wish it weren't, then you'd have to marry me to console yourself."

I smiled at him. "That would be a poor bargain for you, Bobbie," I told him; "I'm sure you've far too much sense to throw yourself away on any girl who only took you as a consolation prize."

"Not at all," he answered blandly. "The main point about matrimony is to marry the girl you want. The sweetest creature that ever strayed out of Heaven is no good to a man if she doesn't happen to be the girl he wants. And in nine cases out of ten she isn't, for sweet creatures are apt to get a little bit tame."

"Oh, Bobbie!" I interrupted; "and I fondly believed you considered me sweet."

"What—you sweet!" he echoed, in feigned amazement. "But, my dear Queenie, look at your temper, and your obstinacy, and your pride! Why, when a chap comes to see you, he never knows whether he's going to be shrivelled up by a glance, or shattered by an attitude, or floored by a sarcasm—unless you happen to be in a particularly good humour, and then you are sublime, and the poor chap feels so pleased with himself because he imagines it is all his doing.

"It's fascinating, you know," running on; "a girl's deadly dull if she's always the same."

I can't say that I felt very flattered, but I was grateful to Bobbie for his chatter, and gladly kept him all the afternoon. At teatime Di arrived, considerably to my surprise.

"I thought I'd just look in," he remarked coolly, "and see that you were all right."

"All right!" laughed Bobbie; "why, she's been shaking like an aspen leaf all the afternoon!"

Di looked at me keenly, and I daresay I was rather pale.

"I ordered some champagne as I came up," he said; "you'd better have two good glasses before you start. It will help you to forget that there is such a thing as failure, and that matters most the first night."

"It might also make it very easy for you to imagine your audience is nothing but a field of cabbages—which I have heard is a great help in overcoming nervousness," said Bobbie wickedly.

Later on Di drove me to the theatre, for which I was grateful.

"You'll be all right," he said, at the last, eyeing me with that keen glance of his. "You've got your colour back, and you look like success."

I smiled and thanked him, going into the theatre with regained self-confidence.

The piece opened with a pretty scene at a fashionable watering-place near New York, in which I was only a country girl selling oranges, but towards the end I had a piece of difficult acting to do in overhearing the story of a gigantic fraud, then being most successfully carried forward by a lady high in American Society, and one or two accomplices.

I owe it to the girl who took this part to say that she acted superbly. Had mine not been the more pleasing and promi

nent character, the palm must assuredly have gone to her. As it was she contributed largely to my success, and could only take the second place.

The plot hinged chiefly upon the detection and unravelling of this fraud, in which I became gradually mixed up through no fault of my own, until by a daring stroke, the real offender managed to throw all the suspicion upon me.

There were one or two exceedingly fine passages, notably the one in which she tried to work upon my feelings to clear her for her son's sake. But I had a lover, and for his sake I turned a deaf ear to her passionate pleading, until it came out that they were one and the same person—her son and my lover.

I understood then how true were her words when she had told me this son worshipped her, for I had often heard it from his own lips, and I was confronted with a terrible problem. Either she or I must go to the wall! Which should it be! Which would spare him the bitterest suffering?

In the end I take her guilt upon my shoulders, and one of the finest scenes of all is that in which I and my lover meet afterwards.

It was a beautiful piece to act—I have never liked any scene so much since, and Yorke Donovan was perfect in it. It begins with passionate intreaty that what he has heard is untrue, followed by the upbraiding of unendurable pain, and then a silence upon both of us that is more terrible than either.

It was an act that I always felt supremely, and it took more out of me than all the rest of the play together. It had in it that element of intensity that I have always welcomed in my life, and without which all life to me has looked colourless and dull. A calm, easy-going life had absolutely no attractions for me.

Sometimes when acting that scene, I was conscious of a fine irony towards the crowded house of beautifully-dressed people. I could see, partly perhaps, with my mind's eye, the eager interest struggling to rise to real feeling, against the inborn inanity, discontent, or boredom of the Society woman. I felt I wanted to turn round and address them.

"You!" I would have said scornfully; "what do you know of life beyond your dressmaker, and your admirers? What can you appreciate truly of any depth? The supreme sacrifices and loves that make it *real*—what are they to you but an 'idle tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.'"

By my special wish we never appeared after that act. The curtain rose once upon my lover sitting with his arms upon a table and his face buried in them, while I turned to take one last, long, yearning look from the door, then fell silently. There was no bowing, and little applause—the whole thing was too intense. Mr. Gregory only gave way after a good deal of persuasion, but in the end he was glad, and Yorke Donovan was with me all through.

"If we drop suddenly to the commonplace by bowing for applause, the whole scene loses its grip," I urged, and he soon came to see it in that light himself.

I wonder it is not a rule followed more by others in the profession. Many a fine scene has seemed to me to lose very much by that sudden drop to the commonplace of the bowing actors, where we should do better to remember them as the men and women they have just been personating.

The final act, when the mother dies, just on the point of confessing, is a powerful piece of writing, but it lacks much of the simplicity of the former acts. There is a slightly forced air of unreality about it. One feels the writer's chief idea was that everything must come right somehow.

For the benefit of those who have never seen the play, I may add that the son never learns the truth about his mother, and there is a striking instance in which his love for her, as he believed her, saves him in an hour of temptation.

A junior at the bar, who is his devoted friend, eventually brings us together by proving to him that I am absolutely blameless, without betraying the real culprit, whom he also proves they have discovered after her death.

This is a clever piece of writing, because it has a most convincing effect, and one is strung to a high pitch of anxiety lest the son should want to know too much, and discover the truth.

It was when Yorke Donovan clasped me in his arms just before the curtain fell, that we realised truly the extent of our success. The applause was literally deafening, and calls were at once made for the author, Yorke Donovan, and myself, the applause the whole time continuing tremendous.

When at last they allowed us to retire, I was growing quite exhausted, and beginning to feel that my overstrung nerves could not hold out much longer. But I had not half done yet, for several critics were waiting to congratulate me, and Mr. Gregory was almost beside himself with delight. I gave them my hands a little vaguely, and looked round for—Di.

I have smiled about that since and wondered not a little. Di had not done half to make me look for him that Bobbie had, and yet there was no hesitation about my glance. Was it that I knew in spite of his apparently apathetic nature he had in reality the deeper feeling?—or was it that I was curious to discover how he liked the piece, and if he had felt at all?

Well, I do not know, for I cannot analyse my feelings about Di even now; I can only reluctantly confess, that though he sometimes irritates me almost past endurance, I invariably turn to him at once in any time of distress. That evening my eyes quickly met his, though he remained in the background, and made no attempt to come and congratulate me. Yet somehow I felt satisfied. I cannot explain how it was, but I knew quite well that his verdict was good.

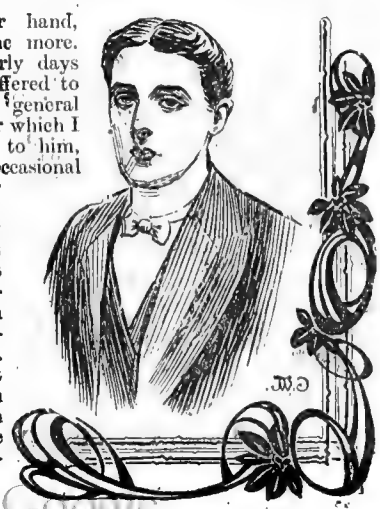
As for Bobbie, he wanted to hug me with delight, and I had quite a difficulty to keep him within bounds, though every now and then he would suddenly break off with a doleful lament, that now, at any rate, I should never take him as a consolation prize.

The story of the next few months can be related in a few words. I received numberless letters of congratulation, mostly from people I had never seen—the seats sold far ahead—the piece was announced a brilliant success—and I was the popular actress of the season.

I moved into a West-end suite of rooms, accompanied by a comfortable middle-aged lady, whom I had engaged as chaperon and housekeeper, received visits from, and was entertained by, some of the highest in the land—and generally shook hands with myself and all the world.

Meanwhile Bobbie continued my devoted attendant. He came and went just as he pleased, talked slang, scolded me, smoked cigars in my drawing-room, and made most insulting remarks about any man friend I seemed to favour.

At intervals he asked me to marry him, as he had said he should, always in some more or less eccentric fashion, and with the same absolutely dauntless nerve. Sometimes he worried me, but I would not have been without him for anything.



Di, on the other hand, seemed to avoid me more. He called in the early days of my success and offered to be my banker and general business manager, for which I was most grateful to him, and afterwards his occasional visits were more or less of a business nature. I cannot say this pleased me. As a matter of fact, it irritated me sometimes to such an extent, that I purposely annoyed him. I used to feel that even quarreling with him was better than the stony composure he appeared to cultivate between us.

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And now I have come to the time when I first sat down to write these confessions, at the flood of my new success, with the world practically at my feet. Perhaps I was a little intoxicated by it all; perhaps I was more impatient than ever of control—I do not know, but at any rate I allowed my obstinacy to lead me into a foolish step, resulting in an awkward dilemma.

Young Lady Filby, who had just got a separation from her husband, but not come off altogether with flying colours, tried to persuade me to go to Switzerland with her and a few others for some skating. Di disapproved of the idea, and came to tell me so.

He called early before I was down, and, knowing his object, I purposely kept him waiting while I changed my dress for one I thought more becoming, and finally sailed into the room with as nonchalant an air as I could muster, conscious that I was looking my best. He was standing on the hearth-rug biting his underlip, as he always did when worried, and his eyes were keen and cold as they met mine.

"You must have thought I was never coming," I exclaimed gaily. "It was too bad of me, but I had mislaid a diamond brooch, and as you are not a busy man, I ventured to keep you waiting while I hunted for it."

"Pray don't apologise," he said, shaking hands coldly. "I hope you were successful."

"Yes. As usual it was only put away fastened into a dress. I am very glad. Prince Kia gave it to me, and I should not like to lose it."

"I, on the contrary, should wish to lose it, were I in your place," he said.

I shrugged my shoulders and laughed lightly.

"From a moral point of view, or because he is of a somewhat inky tinge?" I asked.

"Both," he answered firmly, and shut his lips tightly.

I got up and busied myself carelessly with a vase of flowers, at the same time giving him an opening.

"You have come just in time to say 'good-bye'" I remarked. "I am expecting to start for the Continent next week."

"That is what brought me here before—before you found your brooch," with a delicate sneer."

"Indeed!" I exclaimed. "I imagined it was a business call."

"You can consider it so if you like."

I waited, and he went on in that quiet, masterful way of his, that gave one no loophole whatever. "I should in fact prefer to call it business. I understand you contemplate a trip with Lady Filby's party. Is this correct?"

"Certainly it is," I replied at once.

I cannot tell you why, but just as before, the moment he wished to influence me for my good, a little devil seemed to take possession of me. If only he would not be so arbitrary, I thought, or at any rate so resolutely business-like in all our intercourse. I would have been guided by him. But I could not forgive him the gulf he maintained between us, and the steady reserve, from which only at the merest intervals he ever emerged. Was I not good enough to be his friend? I asked, forgetting that it was his manner to every woman, and steeled myself against him.

"I am sorry," he said, "I hoped I might have been wrongly informed. However, perhaps it is not too late for you to change your arrangements?"

"I am afraid it is," I replied. "And in any case I should not wish to do so." As a matter of fact, I had made no definite arrangements whatever, but the little devil was still prompting me.

"You are very unwise," he said, maintaining his habitual quiet. "I think you should know your world better by this time."

I was rather fond of Lady Filby in a way. She was a pretty, harmless little creature, or at least so I thought, and I chose to be nettled for her.

"What have you to say against my friend, Lady Filby?" I asked, facing him squarely.

"It is not what *I* have to say," he replied, "nor the Law Courts. It is what Society says."

"You mean I am to listen to the pot calling the kettle black?" I said coldly.

"Not exactly, but even in that case, the chances are the kettle would still *be* black."

"But not at all to the extent the pot would make out."

"Then you know things are said?" he questioned.

"I have heard that various scandal-mongers have hit upon her for their latest victim," I replied, "but I should scorn to lend an ear to such petty gossip."

"And if I tell you I believe it is true?" he asked.

"What! You turn scandal-monger also!" I inquired, raising my eyebrows significantly.

He flushed slightly under his white skin.

"If I do it is for your welfare," he said.

"I'm sure you are very kind," I answered, with a touch of sarcasm, "but I think you are taking an unnecessary course."

He was silent for what seemed quite a long time, and a curious struggle went on in my heart. I wanted to get up and go to him and say: "Do be friendly and ask me in a nice way, Di, I don't really care a fig about going." Yet something in his expression still repelled me.

"I wish I could convince you," he said at last. "Whatever you may think, I believe Lady Filby to be a clever, designing woman, and you will gain no good, and possibly considerable harm, from travelling in her company."

I got up, and, strolling to the window, drummed upon the sill with my fingers.

"I am sorry," I said, "but we do not see things in the same light at all, so this conversation is eminently useless. I look upon Lady Filby as an injured friend, and what you say, since I do not believe a word of it, will only make me more resolved to stand by her."

"Very well," he answered quietly, preparing to take his leave. "I can only remind you once again that should you be in any difficulty and want help, you have only to send to me and I will do what I can;" and he held out his hand.

"You are very good," I said, feeling inwardly ashamed of myself, and then he rather hurriedly left the room and went out.

I stood a long time looking out of the window, and then I picked up the paper and set myself to read it.

"I would not have gone if you had put it differently, Di," I kept saying, and all the time the words danced over the lines I was reading.

(In next Tuesday's instalment I meet a duke.)

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BRAND NEW COMPETITION. Start To-day.

Cash Down. Cash Down. Cash Down.

1st Prize, £50. 2nd Prize, £25. 3rd Prize, £10.

And 25 Gramophones.

WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO.

Below will be found six paragraphs containing the buried names of Railway Stations in the United Kingdom (or words that sound the same as the names). You must write in the spaces given the names of the Railway Stations so indicated.

No word or part of a word may be used more than once in making up the name of a Railway Station. In the event of the name of a Railway Station occurring more than once in a sentence, it should be underlined and written down each time. In case of more than one person finding the same number of words for each or any sentence, those words containing the largest number of letters will have preference. No name of a Railway Station may be composed of a single letter, either standing by itself or taken from any word in the sentences.

When you have discovered the names of Railway Stations in the sentences, underline (in ink) the words which go to make up the names (or words that sound the same as the names) and then on the line underneath each sentence write (in ink) the correct names of the Railway Stations to be found in each.

All the names will be found in the Index to Railway Stations in the January edition of Bradshaw's Guide. Should you be unable to obtain a copy of this Guide, a reprint of the Index will be sent to you for three penny stamps on application to *Bradshaw's Guide*, 59 Fleet Street, London, E.C.; or Room Eight, SHORT STORIES, 17 and 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

The names of the Railway Stations consist of one word or two or more consecutive words, or consecutive parts of one word, or two or more consecutive words.

The first prize of £50 will be given to the Competitor who fills in the greatest number of railway stations under the conditions stated. The second prize of £25 will go to the person who fills in the next greatest number, and the other prizes will be awarded in the order of merit.

When you have filled in all the names you can find, cut out the list below and keep it by you. Don't on any account send it to us until the closing date is announced in SHORT STORIES. A fifth list of sentences will appear next week.

In the event of a tie a further list (or, if necessary, several further lists) of sentences will be submitted to the tieing competitors until one wins the first prize outright.

CUT THROUGH HERE

EXAMPLE.

The oaks were swaying in the breeze, the cows were grazing peacefully, when out of the park tore a huge black bull.

The Oaks, Sway, Cowes, Grays, Park, Black Bull.

FOURTH LIST.

19. They left the city by the south gate; while going along a bare lane one of the horses stumbled on a flint.

20. The box contained over twenty different varieties of seeds, besides ferns and seedlings.

21. They talked of the new buildings in Soho, also of the groin just erected at Pwllheli.

22. In the village post-office I met Hilda Morriston; she was on her way to the travellers' rest near Wemyss Castle.

23. The price of coal fell much lower in spite of the distress among the miners. They would not on any account work.

24. Moira showed Sir Guy her new sewing machine, which her neighbour, Mrs. Grotton, had given her.

NAME ..... ADDRESS .....

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WILD MAG.

The Story of a Waif.

"VIOLETS! Penny a bunch! Here you are, sir—just do for your button-hole!"

The girl held out the little bunch of flowers in front of the elder of the two young men who were passing, and walked a step or two by his side, in the hope of inducing him to purchase.

It was a bitterly cold night, and she shivered occasionally as the wind pierced her ragged clothes.

It was easy to see that she was not the ordinary flower-girl, yet it would have been exceedingly difficult to explain in which manner she differed from the others. Most of the passers-by who went up and down that thoroughfare regularly, and so knew the girls by sight, recognised the difference, and were puzzled to account for it. "She's one of 'em, an yet she isn't!" was the lucid way in which the policeman stated the fact.

She was known familiarly as Wild Mag, and she owed this nickname to her peculiar disposition. At one time she would be as quiet as a lamb, demure, and even sad; at another she would be the embodiment of wild exuberance. To-day, dejected and taciturn; to-morrow, full of fun, babbling like a brook, ready for any practical joke. And the change would sometimes take place with startling suddenness.

It was currently supposed that there was some Southern blood in her veins, which might explain these vagaries, but nobody knew. She was good-natured to a fault, but she also showed signs of Southern vindictiveness on occasions.

"A penny won't break you!" she continued, thrusting the flowers a little nearer to the man's face, and uttering a merry laugh as she did so. Then the light from the large lamp outside the club fell full upon his features, and Wild Mag drew back involuntarily; she did not like the look of that face.

She did not withdraw quickly enough, however. The man, angry at her intrusion, threw up his arm with brutal force, catching her at the elbow, and sending her reeling. She had great difficulty in saving herself from falling, but after staggering for a couple of yards she succeeded in keeping her balance.

A storm of angry invective rose to her lips; her eyes flashed, and she half raised the little board, on which she carried her bunches of violets, in order to draw the strap over her head and hurl the board at him, but at that moment his companion came up to her.

"I am very sorry, and I hope you are not hurt!" he said, with true gentlemanly feeling. "My friend is worried, I fear, and—that is, I really do not think he meant it!"

Wild Mag eyed him curiously; she was touched by this attempt at apology, and the tenderer feeling struggled with rage for the mastery.

"You excuse me when I tell you I don't quite take it in!" she declared, with strange dignity.

"Oh, but—" began Kenneth Markham, somewhat lamely, adding hastily: "I'll have six bunches—some other time!" He dropped a sixpence on the board, which had been permitted to resume the horizontal position, and hurried after his companion.

Wild Mag watched them till they disappeared in a club. She took up the sixpence, stared at it, and then, with one of those sudden impulses that were part of her nature, she kissed it passionately.

"One of them is the sort of man you could kill" she hissed through her clenched teeth. "The other——" and here the change of expression was marvellous, and the voice became sweet and musical—"is the sort of man you wouldn't mind being killed for! I've got two debts to pay," she continued in a matter-of-fact tone—"a bad turn and a good turn, and I'll pay them some day!"

The two men passed into the club, the one callous and indifferent, and the other regretful, and neither guessed how soon the incident would have its effect or how wide-reaching the effect would prove.

The next morning Kenneth Markham passed through the street alone; he was in deep thought, and appeared somewhat worried.

He was not aware of Wild Mag's proximity till she pressed a bunch of violets into his hand.

"I don't want any. Oh, it is you! Yes, here is the money!" he said confusedly.

"It's paid for!" she cried, with a slight hysterical laugh. "Six bunches! And six dozen, if you'll have them!" And she was gone.

Scarcely knowing whether to be amused or annoyed, Kenneth went his way to the club where he was to meet Reginald Adeney. Thence they made their way to a private house, where the gaming tables were the attraction.

Three evenings in succession this happened, but on the fourth he declined to accept.

"I will take it, if you will take this!" he said quietly, holding out a shilling. "You are cold, and you look hungry. You were not well treated the other evening, and some compensation is due to you. Take this, and we will cry quits!"

It was strange that he should be holding this colloquy with a flower-girl, but he could not help it; the girl impressed him, and he liked the idea of befriending her.

"I'll take it if you'll let me give you some advice!" said the girl suddenly. She took the coin and laid her hand lightly on his arm. "You did me a good turn, and I want to pay it back. Don't you trust that man you go with to play

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cards and all that! His face is bad—I tell you it *is!*" she cried vehemently, as he shook his head. "*I* can see it!"

She bent and kissed his hand, and fled swiftly along the street. When she was out of his sight, she almost paralysed with amazement a masculine vendor of matches by giving him the shilling without a word and running off again. A few yards farther down, a policeman was standing contemplatively near the kerb; she gave a shout of mad laughter as she tipped his helmet over his eyes, after which she rushed at full speed down a narrow street till she was out of breath, squatting down on a step and weeping as if her heart would break.

Half an hour later she arose and wandered towards the miserable house where she usually obtained shelter for the night.

Kenneth Markham had an uncomfortable feeling within his breast after Wild Mag ran away; her words made him think. He was conscious of the fact that he had been gambling very heavily, but that Reginald Adeney had in any way lured him into evil paths, or was interested in his downfall, seemed absurd.

Adeney was the best of fellows, always ready to oblige and advise. He was not much older in years than Markham, but he was much older in experience, and this experience was valuable to a young man who had just attained his majority and succeeded to a large fortune.

He was something of a family connection, too, being a second cousin to Marian Laing, on her father's side, and Markham was cousin to Marian on the mother's side and engaged to her. What possible reason could Adeney have for acting against him? Yet, he could not get the "advice" out of his mind.

Wild Mag stood before him, facing the ruffianly assailants.

How queerly the girl behaved! "One might almost suppose that she was—— Pshaw! I mean, she had taken a fancy to me!" thought Markham.

Adeney was there before him and Markham was soon lost in the excitement of the game. He lost a good deal, and all the while he was playing there came to him the thought that he would "cut" this sort of thing in a day or two. Adeney came to his side and whispered that he must be off, but Markham only nodded and went on playing.

It was just past midnight when Kenneth Markham left the house and walked homewards; it was a practice of his to walk, as it cleared his head.

He felt rather "seedy," and regretted that he had not smoked and drunk less.

He proceeded at a fairly brisk pace till he reached a quiet point in a main thoroughfare, when he was roughly pulled up by coming butt against a hulking youth. Angry words followed from the lips of this rough, Markham retorted, and the moment afterwards he was being hustled. He struck out manfully, but he would have stood no chance with them.

As he made an effort to reach the houses, in order to place his back against the wall, another figure came upon the scene. Wild Mag stood before him, facing the ruffianly assailants and speaking with scorn and passion.

"Clear out of it, Jimmy Grimes and the whole gang of you! I know you all, and I heard you hatching this game hours ago! D'ye hear? It's Wild Mag who's talking, and I tell you I'll put the police on the lot of you. Touch him if you dare!"

She stood before them with her arms folded across her bosom, defying them, and they cowered under the threat and the influence of her presence. They knew her, for she was practically one of them, living among them; they knew that she would do what she said, and they dared not molest her. She had inspired both love and respect—the respect that comes from fear, perhaps—and they slunk away like beaten curs.

"You can go safe now!" said the girl, addressing Markham. "They won't touch you again, as they knows I understand their game!" she concluded with a laugh.

"I owe you a great debt," rejoined Kenneth gravely. "They would have murdered me, most probably. How is it that you have this power over them?"

"I told you to look out for that friend of yours," cried Wild Mag, almost defiantly, "and I tell you again! He wants to ruin you! I heard him making a deal with Jimmy Grimes to set on you—heard him not long ago—and I've kept watch ever since!"

Kenneth listened with mixed feelings. He could not believe that Reginald Adeney had done such a thing; he was more inclined to doubt the veracity of this waif of the street; yet she spoke with such sincerity that he felt ashamed of the doubt. In any case, she had saved him, and he owed a debt of gratitude and, moreover, she was worthy of better surroundings. Better dressed, and toned down a little by contact with more refined persons, she would be good looking, yes, really attractive!

"I will try to repay you for your help. No, don't refuse. You ought to be better cared for, and earn your living more easily! Take this card and go to the address I am writing on the back. There is a young lady there whom I—er—think a great deal of; she will take you into her service. I'll speak to her about you."

He could not see the sudden blanching of the cheek which followed the utterance of the words "think a great deal of," or he might have been startled. Mag pressed her hand to her side, and her breath came short. She took the card, and remembered nothing of what followed until he was gone.

"You're a fool, a blind fool, Mag!" she muttered fiercely. "What made you think that *you* could be a mate for such as he? *You!* And yet you did think so, so don't deny it! You did, you did! And you can crush it down like this—*this!*"

She clenched her hand, screwing the card in a ball, while her fingers and her features worked convulsively, telling of the depth of feeling.

"Shall I go to her? Yes, I will! It will give me the chance of seeing *him* sometimes, and I shall find out whether she is true to him or larks with others and makes him unhappy, and if she does——!" The right hand was raised solemnly, and Mag hurried away to avoid a policeman who was coming leisurely to the scene where a murder was near to having been committed.

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And thus it came about that Wild Mag entered the service of Marian Laing as maid, and was once more able to save the man she loved in secret.

"How does the new maid get on?" was the query of Kenneth Markham, a week later, and Marian, a quietly enchanting girl of twenty, made a pretty pout and smiled dubiously.

"She is getting a little less awkward," she replied, "and, as she is quick to learn and desirous to please, she will do in time; but she is a trouble in other ways."

"It was very good of you to take her as your own maid," said Kenneth lamely.

"She wouldn't have stopped long in any other capacity!" declared Marian. "And we owed her a great debt of gratitude."

"What trouble does she cause?"

"She is so eccentric and full of—well, mischief. She is just like a great schoolboy at times, and I have hard work to keep her in bounds, especially as I cannot help being amused by her vagaries. But she will get on. Do you know, Ken, she came face to face with Reggie yesterday, and she positively scowled at him! That wasn't proper, so I had to scold her afterwards. She fired up, and said several things about him, but I put it down to her temper—I am sure she has a bad temper!—and I discreetly let the matter drop. I am glad that Reggie didn't notice her look."

"Yes, send for the police," she cried, waving the piece of crumpled paper aloft.

Kenneth said nothing, but he looked grave. Since that night attack he had pulled himself together, as he expressed it, and had ceased to frequent the gaming tables. He had also avoided Adeney, so far as he could without being offensive. He had discovered no foundation for Mag's denunciation, but it made him cautious.

Another week slipped by. Mag had become a general favourite in the house; her fellow servants had learnt her nickname, and, as it fitted her so well, they adopted it. She amused them by her free and easy manner, by her tricks and her witticisms.

She was a capital mimic, and on one occasion simply convulsed them by imitating the somewhat pompous manner of Mr. Laing. Only once did they see her angry; that was when a workman engaged in the house attempted to treat her familiarly. The scene that ensued was one not likely to be soon forgotten either by the man or those who witnessed it.

She was scrupulous and honest to a degree, notwithstanding her rough and mischief-loving disposition, and if anyone had entertained a doubt on the subject, that doubt vanished after the attempt to kiss her.

Wild Mag entered her mistress' room one morning, with a song on her lips, as usual, but the tune died away when she saw Marian weeping.

"What's the matter?" she asked abruptly, placing her hand on Marian's shoulder, and speaking more like an equal than a servant. "What's it about?"

Marian made no reply, and Wild Mag repeated the question sharply.

"You don't understand! You cannot understand!" moaned Marian. "It's about Ken, I mean Mr. Markham. He is in dreadful trouble!"

"What?" gasped Mag, her face assuming an expression of intense anxiety. "What trouble? Tell me, I want to know!"

Marian was too full of her trouble to notice the tone of voice in which Mag spoke. The latter had conceived much affection for her mistress, although she regarded Marian as her successful rival—the woman who had a right to Markham, whereas she had none. She leant over the weeping girl, and stroked her hair, while Marian, feeling the need of confiding in someone, told Mag what had happened.

"He is accused of forging a bill of acceptance in Lord Mallam's name to pay gambling debts."

"That's a lie!" said Wild Mag, with deliberate bluntness.

"What else?"

"He could not get at his own money in time to avoid discovery, they say, as it is in securities which he cannot realise for some time. They suspected him of getting this stolen money, and they found on him a bank note with the number of one of the notes given against the acceptance, and he cannot say how he came by it. Of course, he denies the charge, but they have arrested him!"

"It's a plant! A plot, I mean!" asserted Wild Mag energetically. "Well, I wouldn't cry about it; I'd——"

"You would cry about it, if you loved him as I do!" interrupted poor Marian.

"No, I wouldn't!" muttered Wild Mag, clenching her teeth as if to stifle a pain. "I'd work! And I will work, though I'm supposed not to love him!" Aloud she said calmly, "Someone must work. I've been brought up rougher than you, that's how we look at it differently. I can do the detective dodge. I'm used to prowling about, and I'll find out something. Let me put on some rags and turn flower girl again! He helped me, and I'll help him!"

Marian shook her head helplessly.

"Father is taking it up, but he is inclined to think that Ken is guilty——did it in a weak moment," she moaned. "Mr. Adeney is doing what he can."

"Is he?" sneered Wild Mag. "See here! Do *you* believe he's guilty?" The question was asked fiercely.

"No!" declared Marian decidedly, looking up boldly. "I do not!"

"That's right!" said Wild Mag, with a sigh of relief. "Now we can go on. I'm going out—to think it over."

On her way out she heard voices in one of the rooms. She put her ear to the keyhole.

She heard a word here and there, but she gleaned enough to convince her that Adeney was doing his best to poison the old man's mind, even while he was pretending to be anxious to get Markham out of the mess. She listened further; after a few seconds she stood erect, and with a triumphant gleam in her eyes.

"I see it now!" she murmured. "He is not rich and he wants money. Miss Laing is rich; he wants her and her money—her money above all. He can't get it while *he* is in the way! That's good enough for me, and I'm on the track!"

She stood irresolute now. Should she dress up and dog his steps. Quick-witted as she usually was, she seemed at fault now; her head was confused and she clutched at the hall-stand to steady herself.

In a few moments she felt better, and her eyes fell on a hat and coat hanging there. Like a flash her mood changed.

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She felt the necessity of venting her anger against this man, and her spite took the form of ridicule.

She slipped off her hat and jacket and in a minute had assumed the heavy overcoat, with astrachan collar, and the high hat belonging to Reginald Adeney, and was mimicking him to a nicety.

Smothered laughter caught her ear, and she turned to find three of the servants watching her from a safe distance. She began grimacing about, feeling in the inner breast pocket with an exact imitation of Adeney's mannerism and then exaggerating his gestures.

She dived her hand into this inner pocket and her fingers touched a crumpled piece of paper.

She took it out from its corner, intending to throw it at the grinning servants, but she stopped as another idea occurred to her and she smoothed it out quickly and pretended to read it through an eye-glass, formed by curling her thumb and forefinger.

The servants laughed and waited for the next move, but Wild Mag was really reading. Then the door opened and Adeney and Mr. Laing stood with wide-opened eyes in front of the girl!

"I'll have no more of this nonsense in my house!" roared Mr. Laing furiously. "I've told Marian already that this new maid is—is a bother! It's degrading! She's like a street urchin! How dare you? Take them off instantly and get out of the house!"

"Oh, Mag!" cried Marian, coming down the stairs.

"Send for the police!" cried Adeney angrily. He had recognised the girl before, but he had made no sign, and he was now secretly glad of the chance of being rid of her.

"Yes," cried Wild Mag, drawing herself to her full height and slipping out of the coat, which she threw on the floor and the high hat on the top of it. "Send for the police! I have something to say to them! I want to tell them who forged the paper and got the money, and why it was done!"

She raised the crumpled sheet of thin notepaper and waved it aloft. With a hoarse cry, Adeney rushed at her; it was the slip of paper he had missed and thought he must have burnt with other awkward evidence! He guessed what had happened to it now!

Wild Mag awaited his coming quietly, but as he neared her she lunged out her arm viciously and her clenched fist struck him full in the face.

A great hubbub followed. Wild Mag was ordered to her room, but she held to the paper like grim death. Marian went to her and read the incriminating evidence. It was a note, unsigned, which, short as it was, gave the key to an infamous plot against Kenneth Markham and proved the guilt of Adeney.

Wild Mag heard later what had immediately followed the exposure brought about by her prank, but she did not trouble to understand it fully; all she cared to know was that Kenneth Markham had been released and Adeney had been arrested.

The next thing she knew was that the marriage between Kenneth and Marian was being hastened; Mr. Laing was determined to get the young people settled without more delay.

It was after that announcement that Mr. Laing called Wild Mag into his study and warmly thanked her, at the same time handing her fifty pounds in banknotes. Mag hesitated; the old independent nature begin to assert itself; but she finally accepted.

Back in her own attic chamber Wild Mag was staring into space with set features.

"I cannot stay, I cannot stay!" she wailed. "He will be happy, and she will have him to herself. I want him to be happy, and her too; but I cannot stop to see it! It would kill me, for I love him! I must go, I must go!"

The next morning she was missing; she left a badly-written note to stay that she was off to Australia, and that was all. They tried to find her, but without success. They know that she arrived at Sydney, for she sent a note of congratulation on their marriage; but they never heard again.

F. Brewster.

Your Editor Chats.

The fourth list of sentences in the Competition will be found on page 495. It is not yet too late to enter for it, as back numbers can be obtained on application to the Publisher, inclosing one penny for each copy of *Short Stories* required, and a halfpenny for the postage of each. Ten lists of sentences will appear in all.

I have had several inquiries from readers regarding some points in connection with the Competition, on which they are not quite clear, and for the benefit of other readers in like difficulties am publishing the inquiries, together with my answers.

Question: Can the letters of the words in the sentences be taken in any order, or must they be taken consecutively?

Answer: It is clearly stated that they must be taken consecutively.

Question: If one word alone makes the name of a railway station, and, combined with the next word, makes another name, can both be used?

Answer: If you will carefully read the conditions of the Competition, you will see that it says that "no word or part of a word may be used more than once in making up the name of a railway station."

Question: Does a "part" of a word consist of a syllable or just letters?

Answer: A part of a word consists of either letters or syllables.

Question: Are country readers as eligible for the prize as those readers who live in towns?

Answer: Certainly they are. If you will refer to previous published competition results you will see that quite a number of names of country winners appear.

One reader points out that in the example sentence there are other names of railway stations which are not underlined. He wants to know why they were omitted?——The fact that only certain words were underlined was not meant to imply that there were no other names of railway stations to be found in the sentence. The example sentence is only to serve as a guide as to how the Competition sentences are to be treated.

In case there are any readers who missed what I previously wrote concerning the Fresh Air Fund, I would just mention the fact that this charity gives a day in the country, with a plentiful supply of good, wholesome food, to a child from one of our big cities, for the small sum of ninepence. Eight pounds two shillings pays for a party of 200 children with the necessary attendants. Last year 126,000 children were benefited by the Fresh Air Fund, and this year it is hoped that even more will do so. Donations of any size will be gratefully received and acknowledged in *Pearson's Weekly*. All money should be sent to the Hon. Secretary, Fresh Air Fund, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C. Collecting forms will be sent on application.

Next week the cover of *Short Stories* will consist of a reproduction of the Bruce Tartan. The paper itself will contain features appealing particularly to Scottish readers.

Your Editor.

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Painting for a Wife.

The Story of a Novel Kind of Wooing.

"Some persons would not comprehend it," murmured Bertram Hardcastle as he stared at the blank canvas on the easel, "but we artists—that is, those whose souls are absolutely in their art—are not quite like ordinary persons, and to me the idea is perfectly intelligible. In fact, it is a natural thing to do! Others may call us cranks, but that is because they can never reach the lofty heights to which the love of our art takes us!"

He continued to gaze fixedly at the canvas and there appeared before his eyes, conjured up by the imagination, the vision of a girl of entrancing loveliness.

The outlines of her form, the cut of her features, the poise of the head—all were perfect. The expression of the countenance was one of ecstasy; it indicated a frame of mind that seized with passion on an idea and became devoted, heart and soul, to it. It was the vision of Nydia Wontner, the daughter of the celebrated Royal Academician.

Mr. Hugh Wontner, R.A., had gained a reputation both as a painter and a teacher of painting; his pupils were all doing good work and bade fair to become celebrated in their turn. He had one great regret—his daughter was not an adept with the brush.

Hugh Wontner had longed for a son to follow in his footsteps, but this joy had been denied to him. He had then centred his care and hopes on Nydia, endeavouring to train her to become an artist of repute, and he had even cherished the belief that one day she would force the Royal Academicians to accept her as one of them.

Nydia was, as already mentioned, loveliness itself, and her adoration of art grew into a mania; but in spite of all her efforts she made no mark in her father's art.

It was a cruel disappointment for both father and daughter, and it seemed incredible that, with her love for it and her undoubted skill in criticism, she was nevertheless little more than a dauber herself. Yet so it was.

Nature is not so blind as some think in her bestowal of gifts upon mortals, for, having plentifully endowed Nydia in other ways, she declined to fill the cup to overflowing.

It was Nature's method of balancing matters. Nydia was lovely and accomplished in other directions, but the artistic skill was denied to her. "Perhaps that gift has been bestowed on another who is not so well endowed physically," observed a worthy clergyman, and Nydia bowed to conceal her grief.

It was precisely this condition of things which had led to the conception of a plan, the promulgation of which had thrown Bertram Hardcastle into such profound meditation. Art was everything to Nydia, and next to it came the longing to afford to her father, as nearly as possible, the pleasure and pride which he had hoped to derive from her abilities.

"I believe that I can inspire within the breast of an artist the passion that will guide his eye and hand to produce masterpieces!" she declared earnestly. "My father says that I inspire him; then I can inspire one or other of his pupils, especially as some of them have hinted at love for me!

"If I help to fame one of my father's pupils, so that the world will say that he owes his celebrity first to his teacher and then to his wife, will it not gratify my father almost to the same extent as if I had been clever with the brush?"

The idea took complete possession of her, and after a week she told her father of her plan.

"There are at least four of your pupils who might become celebrated if they had this inspiring influence," she explained, "and I propose to bring that influence to bear upon one of them. I will marry the one who paints the two best pictures.

"You can tell each of them as they call here; let each choose his two subjects without knowing the subjects chosen by the other three, and let them bring those pictures for exhibition to the gallery where your masterpieces are hung.

"We—you and I—will be the judges. To the world we will announce that you are giving a prize for competition among your best pupils, but only they and I will know the truth!"

"Good!" exclaimed the R.A. "Next to the gratification of my own special desire—which cannot be!—this will please me most!"

He was about to add, as the thought struck him, that the pupils might decline, but he dismissed the notion with a smile; he remembered the slavish devotion with which some of them had watched and attended her, and those were among the most likely pupils.

So the four best pupils were notified, and Bertram Hardcastle was one.

The young artist could not collect his thoughts sufficiently to think of two subjects until two days later. He was completely absorbed by his love for Nydia.

He had always been under a spell of fascination, but he had felt that his love was hopeless, and now the chance of winning her was offered to him. It fanned the flame into a fierce blaze, and he was unable to think coherently.

At last the two subjects suggested themselves; he would paint Nydia in one subject, and it should be as the Almsgiver, while the other picture would be a country scene, a reminiscence of his native village, "The School Treat."

In "The Almsgiver" he would depict Nydia with the tender sympathy of which he was sure she was capable, and in the second painting he might also introduce her as the daughter of the squire, aiding her father's small guests to enjoy the treat. Homely subjects, yet capable of inducing the greatest talent.

The subjects having been approved by Mr. Wontner, the competitors were at liberty to commence their task, but Bertram Hardcastle found it difficult to begin.

He had imagined that he could proceed with the work almost without effort, so great was his passion for Nydia, but now the task seemed too much for him. He began twice, and obliterated the work on the following day.

"I'm as nervous as a kitten!" he groaned. "Yet think of what it means to me, and it will not be surprising that I am in this state! Up till now there had always appeared to be some chance that I might win her, but if I fail in this she is lost to me for ever!

"I can't do anything to-day! I must have a chat with Mrs. Oakley or her daughter. The worthy woman usually calms me down with her sensible, motherly talk, and her daughter seems to be somewhat like her."

He rang the bell and again dropped into a reverie.

"There's a decided difference between Bertha Oakley and Nydia Wontner in looks! By Jove, the landlady's daughter

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doesn't shine by comparison of looks! A plain face, yet with the same simple attractiveness as her mother's.

"She will make a good wife for some mechanic—h'm, perhaps she is fitted for a higher grade, for she is well educated, there's no denying that, and there is refinement about her which suggests more of the lady. That's the danger of the present system of education.

"Of course, if she has it in her it ought to be brought out, I admit, but isn't it going to make her less happy? She will never marry as well as she ought. What chance does she——? Oh, good afternoon, Miss Oakley!" he said aloud, in some confusion. "Let me see, what did I ring for? Oh, give me a cup of tea, please! I'm fagged to-day, and the inspiration won't come!"

"Certainly, Mr. Hardcastle," said the girl quietly, repressing a smile.

"What made me call her 'Miss Oakley'?" Hardcastle asked himself in some perplexity. "I always call her 'Bertha,' and it never appeared out of place till now. Positively, I don't think I can call her by her Christian name again!"

Another pause.

"She and her mother can both help me in the country scene, and I could paint them both in it, of course!" he continued. "Mrs. Oakley naturally remembers the old green better than I do, and I expect her daughter recollects it. It's an advantage in some respects to have a landlady who comes from your native place; she takes a pride in the success of one of its inhabitants, you see!"

Bertha appeared with the tea, laid it out very daintily on the table, and was about to withdraw when Hardcastle stopped her.

"Do you paint now?" he asked suddenly. He remembered how he had given her instruction or hints on several occasions.

"A little, Mr. Hardcastle," replied the girl, flushing.

"That's right!" he remarked approvingly. ("What on earth is she turning red like that for?" he asked himself.) "I have quite forgotten to ask you for—for ever so long!" he added, as he reflected that it was a very long time since he had made any inquiry. "I shall probably want you and your mother to help me," he continued, in an endeavour to be sociable. "I am going to paint a village school treat for a—yes, for a prize."

"That will be very good!" cried the girl enthusiastically, after he had explained the subject of the proposed picture. She appeared to take the greatest interest in it, and evidently looked forward to the chance of being helpful. "It is for a prize? What kind of a prize?"

This question nonplussed Bertram Hardcastle. He had calculated on telling her just as much as he wanted to and no more. It was an awkward inquiry, but he decided to face it boldly.

"A wife!" he said briefly. "If I win, I marry Miss Nydia Wontner!"

The girl rattled the sugar basin against the milk jug and nearly upset it.

"That is a curious idea!" she observed.

"Yes, it may seem so," he admitted; "but she is passionately devoted to art, so she would be just as passionately devoted to the man who could produce a good picture. See?"

Unconsciously it appeared to him that he must justify Nydia's action in the eyes of this girl, although he could not understand why. In fact, he was unable to comprehend why he was thus talking to Bertha at all, yet the conversation pleased him.

"I don't see it that way at all!" replied the girl decisively. "Love should control, not fascination for art."

"Ah, but I am madly in love with her, and she would love me because of my art!" he declared, making the avowal of the state of his feelings without knowing that he had placed his heart on his sleeve. "Then I have to paint another picture; I'll tell you about it!"

He did so, concluding with a glowing panegyric of Nydia, followed by the question, "Have you seen her?"

"Yes, in the park," returned Bertha slowly. "There is the bell. I must go."

She seemed glad to escape. Bertram Hardcastle drank his tea. That talk had somehow done him good, and he made a small beginning with the more important of the two pictures.

The painting progressed slowly day by day; the young artist was not satisfied with himself, and he grew despondent. He tried the effect of alternating the work, and made a beginning with "The School Treat."

Bertha knocked at the door with a letter one afternoon, when he was in a brown study in front of this second picture. He bade her "Come in," and she entered.

"Thank you," he said, taking the letter mechanically and laying it down on a chair. "I say! That child, there, doesn't seem right to me, but I am not very fit this afternoon. Do you see anything wrong about her?"

"Outsiders see more than those engaged!" opined Bertha modestly. "I think the frock is not quite right, and I don't like the expression. It wants just a touch here, and the frock should be just curved there!"

She pointed with a needle which she produced from somewhere, but Hardcastle looked moodily at her. His mind was away from the picture as a matter of fact.

"I wish I could touch it as I see it!" cried Bertha, with a sigh. "But I should spoil it!"

"*That* won't matter!" cried Bertram carelessly. "It's no good, I know, while I'm doing it! Harry Walton will win, I'm afraid!"

"If I wished to win a wife I should try; I shouldn't turn faint at the very start!" cried Bertha. "I would try, try, try! Nothing should stop me!"

She spoke warmly and her cheeks became suffused with colour. Hardcastle gazed in surprise at her animated face. Now he understood better than ever before how Nydia could conceive her plan—she could inspire! This girl was capable of encouraging and infusing energy into him and life into his work, then how much more so would it be with a beautiful woman like Nydia! He turned for his brush, but Bertha had taken it up and was touching the picture.

"Good!" cried Hardcastle in admiration. "I say, you're clever!"

"No!" she cried hastily, releasing the brush. "Those lines are only daubs, but they show what I mean. You must think me very presumptuous!"

"Not at all!" he told her. He wanted her to stay, but she hurried out of the room.

Mrs. Oakley did not often answer his ring; it was Bertha who came, as a general rule, and he invariably asked her for her opinion on this point or that. He showed her the more important picture and she criticised it, or so much of it as was done, with skill and tact.

Bertram Hardcastle was greatly pleased; this girl was intellectual and discerning, and she was able to point to the faults which had escaped him.

When he felt despondent, which condition was becoming too common to be pleasant, he rang for her on some pretext and then asked for her opinion.

Several days passed and the young artist worked hard, but not one of those days went by without Bertha Oakley looking at his pictures

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and expressing an opinion. Hardcastle began to regard her criticism as necessary, and he failed to notice that words of encouragement always accompanied the opinion.

Men are blind sometimes, although their eyes are wide open; Hardcastle, fascinated by Nydia, was blind to what was occurring nearer to him.

The country scene was finished, but the picture in which Nydia was the central figure was only half done.

"Do you think that is like Miss Wontner?" asked Bertha deferentially, with her eyes fixed on the face painted on the canvas.

"She is more beautiful than that and more kind!" cried Hardcastle enthusiastically. "I can never paint her as she is, and that is why I feel sorry that I chose to do so!"

"You can alter the central figure and make it someone else," said Bertha quietly. "There is time!"

"No, no! It must be she or no one! But why do you ask? Do you not think the likeness good enough to satisfy most people? You have seen her."

"I hardly know," returned Bertha, reddening slightly. "I think—that is, it is difficult to imagine Miss Wontner in that capacity and so the portrait seems——" She stopped in confusion.

"Ah, that is because you do not know her well enough!" cried Hardcastle warmly. "She is goodness itself, I know it! So sympathetic, so lovely, so bewitching!" He pulled himself up abruptly and continued more soberly: "Tell me how you think it might be improved—your advice has been valuable to me, for you have been able to take a calmer view of things than I. Some part of this work must be credited to you!"

Bertha reddened a little more, but deprecated the statement. She drew Bertram's attention to certain details and he made alterations quite as a matter of course.

At last the pictures were completed and sent in. Hardcastle was in a state of great excitement; he made no attempt to conceal his feelings from Bertha Oakley; he treated her now as he would have treated a sister. He was tormented by the fear of losing, and he expressed that fear in order to hear the words of encouragement that always came from Bertha. She spoke quietly, and with her usual unassuming manner, yet with evident sincerity and sympathy.

"I think you will win—I hope you will!" she would say. "That will make you happy, and I am sure that it would please us very much indeed, mother and I, to know that you had attained your desire!"

"Thank you!" he would reply, without even giving a thought to the strangeness of the position in which Fate had thrown them, he and his landlady's daughter.

It was not till the morning of the day on which the result was to be made that this thought occurred to him, and he explained it thus:

"You see, we are from the same village, and the people of our county are very clannish. When they are away from the county they will hold together notwithstanding the greatest difference in social position."

He made his way to the Gallery. It was part of Wontner's plan that the winning artist should learn the result by seeing his pictures with a printed card underneath, on which was the word "Prize."

The four competitors were there at the appointed hour: with straining eyes each sought his own productions. Bertram Hardcastle saw the card attached to the frame of "The Almsgiver," and a similar card under "The School Treat."

His breath came in short gasps; he felt stifled and he staggered from the Gallery into the street. He tried to calm himself, but his head was in a whirl; before his eyes was "The Almsgiver," but the face of the central figure was different—it was Bertha Oakley, not Nydia Wontner!

He placed his hands to his burning brows, but he could not still the throbbing. He saw a hansom passing; he hailed it and told the cabman to drive to his own lodgings. He ought to have gone to Wontner's residence, but something impelled him homewards.

"I've won!" he cried wildly, as Bertha opened the door.

"I'm so glad!" she cried, but even in his excited condition she noticed that his face was deadly pale. "You are ill!" she exclaimed in alarm, as he staggered.

Mr. Wontner waited all day for the successful artist to call and be formally presented to his daughter, and be as formally accepted as her future husband, but Hardcastle came not. He was lying in bed with an attack of brain fever, and he was asking why his brush would paint the plain features of Bertha Oakley in place of the exquisite face of Nydia Wontner. He was delirious, but not wildly so; he was speaking quietly, so quietly and rationally that it was difficult to understand that he was not conscious.

He was in the same condition on the following day, when Mr. Wontner and his daughter called to inquire about him. Nydia was self-willed and refused to stay downstairs.

"Why should I not see him? He is to be my husband, and I have a right to see that proper care is being taken of him!"

Bertha tried to dissuade her, but in vain; so the plain girl led the way, followed by the beautiful, but cold, Nydia, Mr. Wontner, and good Mrs. Oakley.

Hardcastle was talking as they entered.

"It was Bertha who helped me and inspired me!" he was saying in low, distinct tones. "It is her face that I have painted in that picture! Yes, yes, Bertha Oakley is the wife we are trying to win, not Nydia! How was it that I never suspected that she loved me? I see it all now, so plainly, her words of encouragement, her sympathy, the grand expression that came into her eyes and made the plain face beautiful!"

"He is raving!" cried Bertha piteously, wringing her hands and trying to evade the searching look that shot from Nydia's eyes. "You must not listen to him!"

Mrs. Oakley laid a soothing hand on the heated forehead of Bertram Hardcastle, and he was quiet for a time, but not for long. He continued to ramble on in the same manner all the time that Nydia and her father remained.

The Wontners made inquiry twice daily concerning his condition, and they sent dainties when he had recovered sufficiently to take them, but they did not come again.

It was not till Hardcastle had been out for a drive that Mr. Wontner called. He saw Bertram alone; the interview was of some length, and they parted in very amiable fashion. Bertha heard Mr. Wontner say:

"I think this arrangement is the best for all concerned," and Hardcastle assented.

"I said a good many things while I was ill," said Bertram to Mrs. Oakley's daughter when she entered an hour later. "I can guess what they were, from what Mr. Wontner has told me, and what has been running in my mind ever since I fell ill. Well, it's true!"

"What?" inquired Bertha, receding a step as he advanced towards her.

"It's true that I love you, Bertha!" he cried, catching her and pressing her shrinking form to his breast. "And it is true—is it not?—that you love me!"

"I—I don't know!" faltered Bertha, blushing divinely.

"But *I* know, dearest!" he interrupted, kissing her. "And Miss Wontner recognises that, as we both love one another, the old plan had better be abandoned. To which I heartily assent! I expect she will marry another pupil! I understand that love is more likely to inspire than pride, and that I have at last opened my eyes to the treasure that has been near me all along. I am quite willing that Miss Wontner should marry someone else! Are you, Bertha?"

In reply she laughed a happy little laugh and hid her face on his breast.

G. Hazell.

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NEW SERIAL.

Held Apart

The Story of a Strange Double Fraud and its Influence upon some Young Hearts, a Great Name, and a Famous Fortune.

By R. NORMAN SILVER.

Author of "The Golden Dwarf," "A Daughter of Mystery," etc.

SOME INTERESTING PEOPLE.

John Davenal. A diver.
Hannah Davenal. His sister maid to Lady Tarleton.
Moira. Supposed to be the diver's daughter.
Sir Guy Vanbrugh. Moira's lover.
Adeline, Lady Tarleton. His aunt.
Irene Tarleton. Her daughter.
Edward Stormont. Lady Tarleton's brother-in-law.
Paul Jerome. His friend, a war-correspondent and journalist, in love with Irene.
Dennis Hartigan. A ship's steward, and husband of Hannah.
"Kit" Hartigan. His sister, a blind girl.
Detective-Sergt. Ussher. Of Scotland Yard.

SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

What Paul Jerome Saw.

For a fraction of a moment the singular spectacle that had presented itself to the vision of the war-correspondent remained in sight. But a puff of wind had caught the sails of the fishing-coble, and she forged past the anchored vessel at a suddenly increased speed.

The little gust stirred the long golden locks that had fallen upon the clumsy canvas shoulders and brass neck-piece of the diving-suit. They framed in an aureole of dishevelled tresses a delicately girlish head, whose flushed features wore an expression of mingled dissatisfaction and embarrassment.

A few seconds more and—relieved of the huge helmet and ponderous, leaden-soled diving-shoes—she had stepped down into the well of the smack and vanished.

Paul Jerome glanced at his companion—the old fisherman was gazing astern of the fishing-coble, his sturdy figure swaying to its motions, his brows wrinkled under the peak of his worn serge cap.

"Did you see that?" asked the war-correspondent somewhat unnecessarily.

The boatman took off his cap to smooth thoughtfully the thin and grizzled thatch it had surmounted.

"Aye, sir," he said deliberately, "it was a woman!" He replaced his cap, sat down on the weather side of a thwart, put the mainsheet under his foot, and cut a fresh quid from a coil of black twist.

The war-correspondent brought the coble round to skirt the end of the breakwater. His companion hauled in the mainsail-boom for the run up the harbour in the gathering twilight. Paul Jerome piloted the little vessel skilfully.

"Till now," he observed, "I have never heard of a woman diver, much less seen one. Is she a professional?"

The boatman pocketed his coil of tobacco. "No, sir," he said, "and I can't make out what she's doing yonder at all. But it's not the first time she's been down, though, for she's a spunky young thing, and a year or more ago she got round her dad—who's a diver himself, sir, to let her have a dip in the suit."

His lantern jaws worked meditatively upon his quid.

"That was only in a couple of fathoms," he added, "up towards the beach, very early one morning, when the tide was at dead ebb, and there was no wind. I saw it myself, leastways I saw the diver go down, and asked John Davenal afterwards if he was breaking in a new hand. And he laughed and says he, 'Aye,' he says, 'my little lass wanted to know what her dad's job was like.'"

"John Davenal!" exclaimed Jerome, amazed. "You don't mean to say that that is his daughter?"

"Aye, do I," answered the boatman, "that's Mollie Davenal. Moira, her real name is, but we call her Mollie. And a pretty lass she is, and a plucky one. But what she wants to come playing herself yon fashion at nightfall, on the wrong side of the breakwater, I haven't a notion, sir. Not to speak of her dad lying ill at home with a knife-stab in his back, as he is, sir."

"Yes," said Jerome, "I heard about that."

The other nodded, and rose to lower the lug-sail, the coble crept forward in the darkening harbour under her flapping jib. The war-correspondent started from a reverie as the

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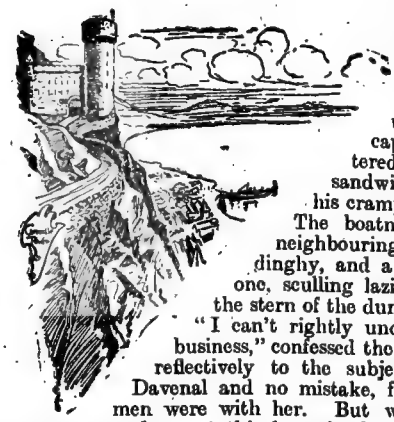

anchor splashed into the smooth water about them, and the coble came to rest. He picked up a huge waterproof cape and a much battered enamelled tin sandwich-box, and stretched his cramped limbs.

The boatman shouted to the neighbouring landing for a dinghy, and a lounger put off in one, sculling lazily with an oar over the stern of the dumpy craft.

"I can't rightly understand yon diving business," confessed the boatman, returning reflectively to the subject; "it was Mollie Davenal and no mistake, for her father's own men were with her. But what a lass like that wants to go down at this hour in five fathoms or them to let her, fair moiders me."

"Five fathoms!" replied the war-correspondent. "Thirty feet! Surely there are not thirty feet so close to that side of the breakwater?"

"Yes, sir," he was told; "every bit of it, the rocks the breakwater's built on shelve away. When Sir Guy Vanburgh's yacht struck the breakwater and sank, she settled off till she was in full five fathoms. It was all they could do to pump her out at that depth.

The boatman shifted his quid, and watched the approaching dinghy.

"And it's not fit to let a lass go down," he said. "Not but what they must have some good reason for it, though what it can be I can't so much as imagine; seeing, as I said, sir, the yacht was got up a week since. John Davenal did the job himself. But if it were still to finish, there are other divers in Groudle without putting it on the lass. Well, well, here's the dinghy, sir!"

He stooped to hold the gunwale of the shallop that had come from the shore. Paul Jerome lingered to pay for his afternoon's excursion, and then, entering the dinghy, he was rowed to the landing. He sprang up the steps to the level of the quay, and hurried round the harbour to the breakwater. But the smack was nowhere to be seen, unless a vague shadow in the dusk off the ragged cliff of Groudle's head were she.

Paul Jerome shrugged his shoulders. The gesture meant that he had declined to come to any definite decision upon the extraordinary problem over which the ancient boatman had puzzled with such characteristic stolidity.

He bent his gaze upon the now scarcely visible surface of the tide that was lapping at the granite wall of the breakwater. Was it indeed true that a young and comely woman had descended into these chill depths, a task usually reserved for the strong and daring among men?

Was there—could there be any adequate reason for so singular, even so hazardous a proceeding, in which, not foolish and irresponsible amateurs, but practical operators, her father's assistants, had aided her.

Her father—that was John Davenal! So the big, pleasant, grey-eyed Cumberland man was her father! The thought of the distressed feminine face, so delicately shy amid its tumbled masses of yellow hair above the metal collar of the diving-dress, lent a new interest to the strange riddle into whose midst he had been flung—the riddle that linked Lady Tarleton's murdered maid to the sinister Hartigan, Hartigan to the little blind girl whose life he had himself saved, John Davenal to his grim brother-in-law, and all to the astute yet blundering Ussher.

As the thought of the detective crossed his mind, the war-correspondent laughed, shook off his absorption, and turned along the sea front. With long strides he passed through the little town, and made for the black and distant silhouette of Groudle Tower.

His route led him over the level crossing. He was conscious of something like a shudder as he traversed the wooden planks that levelled the permanent way.

It had been a desperate leap that he had adventured—the short take-off, the awkward landing on the planks of the crossing, the standing jump into the lane beyond! Well for him and the blind girl that the gallant old hunter had not failed.

The shudder darkened his countenance with a frown. The recollection of that exciting moment diverted his thoughts from the peculiar doings of John Davenal's daughter to those of the man Hartigan. He had seen the latter lead his companion through the gates, disengage his arm from hers, and leave her on the wooden crossing, himself springing forward out of danger.

Was it cowardice—or——? Was it, then, chance that Hartigan and no other had gone out with John Davenal the night that the latter was found dying at his own gate? Was it chance, or——?

Revolving these sombre questions, the war-correspondent pushed on, regained the high-road, and passed the old wayside hostelry, known as the Half Brick. Nearing the large entrance of Groudle Tower, he became aware that he was overtaking a figure of vaguely familiar gait and appearance. Drawing level with it he saw that it was the ex-steward. Both men by now were threading the avenue by which the Tower was approached.

Dennis Hartigan touched his cap with sullen politeness.

"Evening, sir!" he said.

Paul Jerome acknowledged the salutation. Hartigan stepped to his side, an unpleasantly disingenuous smile showed the ex-steward's teeth in the growing twilight.

"I'm afraid, sir," he added, "you've a bad opinion of me about that affair the other day—my losing my head at the crossing over yonder."

"You are perfectly correct," declared the war-correspondent bluntly.

Hartigan twisted the tips of his stiff, pale moustache with his powerful fingers.

"You must think as you choose, sir," Jerome was told, "but, all the same, I'm a man that's given a good account of myself in many a stand-up fight. I've had the thanks of the Board of Trade for my share in putting down a Lascar riot on a liner.

"It mayn't be modest to mention it, but I saved the captain's life. When a man loses his nerve, however, he loses it, and he isn't to be called coward just because something says to him 'Jump!' and he jumps."

Paul Jerome stalked on, his hands behind his back, one bright eye stealing covert glimpses of the speaker from under its drooped lashes.

"I don't believe you to be a coward, Hartigan," he replied, "I should say myself you had no small amount of both brute courage and brute intelligence. I merely remarked that you were either a coward or——"

He paused, breaking his sentence. "Or a what, sir?" asked Dennis Hartigan, loweringly.

"A most unlucky person," said Paul Jerome; "in which latter belief I am somewhat encouraged by the fact that you were arrested in connection with your wife's murder and that you happened to be the one who went out alone with John Davenal on the night of the attempt upon his life. To be continually brought into positions suggesting—mind I say suggesting—criminality, is the worst of all possible luck."

Dennis Hartigan clenched his fist. "You've a clever tongue in your head, sir," he growled, "and it's a bit beyond me if you're insulting me or laughing at me. But I've said what I had to say, and so good night to you, sir."

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"Good night," answered the war-correspondent; "and if I were you, Hartigan, I would go back to the sea, or get abroad, anywhere where your bad luck wouldn't be quite so conspicuous. I gave you a certain warning the other day, respecting your sister Kit. If John Davenal dies I shall feel it my duty to suggest to the police that they submit your alibi on a particular night to a searching investigation."

The ex-steward set his jaw, his teeth gnashing audibly like those of an angry animal.

"And I tell you, sir," he said, "that there's a law to protect even the poor from such tongues as yours. Don't you slander me in public, my gentleman, or I'll make you regret it. I'm a man known and respected in my profession, and a man who has been called a hero, by one of his Majesty's consuls. So be warned, Mr. What's-your-name, and you may save yourself a lot of trouble."

With a final snarl, Dennis Hartigan dropped abruptly behind and kept there. The war-correspondent pursued his way calmly to the Tower.

Reaching its forbidding portals as the dressing bell was ringing, he mounted leisurely to the upper portions of the house. Not till he reached his own room did it occur to him to wonder what errand relating to his dead wife's affairs was bringing Hartigan to the Tower.

Moving at a slouching, sulky walk, the ex-steward had attained his destination, and at that moment was expecting admission at the great hall doors. He had vented part of his suppressed fury upon the bell-handle—the doors flew open with some degree of precipitation, and a footman appeared. When he perceived the rank of the caller who had ventured so unmistakably to signify his impatience, he drew himself up in an icy disdain.

"I want to see Lady T.," intimated Dennis Hartigan, stepping over the threshold; "you can say Davenal's husband presents his humble duty and will be glad of a word with her ladyship about the little matter she was so kind as to mention the other day. She will remember—the tombstone over my poor wife's grave."

The servant closed the doors. "It is not at all likely that her ladyship can see you," he said; "the dressing-bell has just gone. But I will inquire; there may, of course, be a message."

The ex-steward sat down on an oaken settle and waited ill-temperedly. At length the footman reappeared, motioning to him from the other side of the hall.

"My lady can give you a moment only," he observed, ushering Dennis Hartigan into the cheerless reception-room where the ex-steward had obtained his first private interview with the mistress of the Tower.

He tossed his hat on to a table and lolled in a drab but capacious settee. Ultimately, with a rustle of skirts and the subtle odour of some smart perfume, Lady Tarleton swept into the apartment. The door of the room closed behind her, and she stood looking at the ex-steward.

Dennis Hartigan rose. "Evening, my lady," he said, approaching her; "your ladyship will pardon my little fairy tale to your flunkey—about the tombstone. I knew your ladyship would understand that I wished to see you about the matter we really did discuss at our last meeting—that matter of ten thousand pounds for a bit of—news."

Lady Tarleton plucked at the lace of her tea-gown. "Well?" she demanded, but there was a veiled eagerness in the query.

The ex-steward smiled as he detected it.

"I've not come to tell your ladyship that bit of news," he answered, "*yet*."

A shade settled on Lady Tarleton's features. "Then why trouble me at this absurd hour?" she responded irritably.

Hartigan picked up his cap.

"I can go, if you wish it, my lady," he said; "but I am certain your ladyship would regret it later on, specially as I only wanted a clear understanding with respect to one or two matters."

"And they are?" added Lady Tarleton curtly.

The ex-steward tucked his cap under his arm, and tapped his left palm with his right forefinger.

"This ten thousand," he continued, lowering his voice;

THIS IS NOT A PUZZLE: WHAT IS IT?

You have two minutes to spare, haven't you? Of course. You are not in a hurry to catch a train, or pay a bill? Well, then, answer us this question: *What is the leading sign of a condition of things in your body, which, if not soon corrected, leads straight to the graveyard; and yet none but healthy persons ever have it, and they have it every day?*

You will scratch your head for hours before you hit upon the true answer, and yet it is simple as simple can be. Come to think, you had better read this article straight through, and perhaps the truth will dawn on your mind without our being obliged to tell you outright. Let us then get at it gradually through listening to the tale of a person who once had a very unhappy bit of experience.

Off and on, for twelve years, this lady suffered intense pain in the chest, accompanied often with a feeling of sinking in the pit of the stomach, at times so unbearable that she would roll on the floor in agony. Even when free from pain, which was not often, she scarcely dared venture out of doors for fear of falling—her head went so dizzy and her legs felt so useless. The feeling she would never get better made her terribly low and depressed. She was a wife and the mother of nine children, which made this calamity all the more serious. Dear, dear, what terrible tumbles we take sometimes, don't we? To-day on the hill-top viewing our farm; to-morrow asking employment from its new owner. So life goes. This lady's experience was by no means uncommon, nor was it all cloud and no sunshine, as we shall presently see. But first, let us finish her story. She felt hungry but could not eat. Her tongue was furred and there was a nasty taste ever present in her mouth. A persistent hacking cough shook her from head to foot.

Though constantly under medical treatment, she experienced no benefit, until on the advice of a neighbour she bought a bottle of Mother Seigel's Syrup. This sufficed to relieve the pain and perseverence in its use effected a complete cure. Writing from her home in New Street, Ridley, Kent, she says: "I feel better now than I have done for eighteen years. I relish my food, sleep well and feel well. After twelve years of pain, Mother Seigel's Syrup cured me when everything else failed. I have a family of nine children and attribute their freedom from sickness to the fact that I occasionally give them a dose of Mother Seigel's Syrup."

(Signed) (Mrs.) Sarah Banks.

Now, what is it, in your body which, if not soon corrected, leads to death?—a symptom which none but healthy persons ever have, and they have it every day? Why, *hunger*, to be sure. Unsatisfied hunger means *starvation*, and in the end *all lingering diseases kill by starvation*.

Eat and digest and you live, and are healthy. Lose your appetite and digestion and your death-warrant is signed. Mrs. Banks' trouble began in the mere loss of appetite. When digestion and appetite fail, the wisest course is to restore tone to the stomach and blood by the use of the root and herb tonic which made Mrs. Banks feel better than she had done for eighteen years.

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"when should I be paid it? When I brought you the news in question, eh, my lady, the news, that is, of the child's death?"

"Certainly," assented the other, unable to avoid a start at the grim significance of the inquiry; "I will provide myself, on any reasonable warning, with notes to the amount I promised."

Dennis Hartigan smiled contemptuously. "I won't insult your ladyship's brains," he retorted, "by supposing that you expect me to risk—what I should risk, on that understanding. I come to you and I say, 'The girl is safely out of the way.' What do you say? 'My good fellow, I am glad to hear it, but now that is so there is really no need for me to part with any ten thousand pounds. As for you, if you don't want to put your head in a noose, you will keep a still tongue in it.'"

Lady Tarleton bit her lip; there was truth in the ex-steward's cynical prophesy. "What do you propose?" she asked.

The ex-steward held up one hand; the first, second, and third fingers stiffly extended.

"I want three out of the ten down," he said; "for that I'll tell you where the child is—then you can be sure I mean business. The rest you can let me have three months after—when you've had time to raise it on your reversion to the estate. As soon as the child is dead you will be the legal heir, at present you are only supposed to be."

"And if you refuse to trust me for ten thousand," sneered Lady Tarleton, "why do you consent to trust me for seven?"

"Because," she was answered, "I shall at least have had something for my pains. And, as your ladyship will see on reflection, if you play me false and drive me to desperation, I may revenge myself by putting my own neck in the noose in order to get yours there."

"On your unsupported word!" said Lady Tarleton. "Do you imagine that I would have risked making this infernal compact before witnesses?"

The ex-steward favoured her with a bullying, sinister glance. "What did Hannah tell you, my lady?" he rejoined; "'Go down to Groudle Tower and look.' What if I send others to look—that will prove part of my story.

"Do you want the estate thrown into Chancery, or do you want it to drop into your mouth like a ripe cherry? No, my lady, your interest and mine go together, and that's the best fidelity guarantee."

He shrugged his shoulders cynically as he made the intimation.

"Ten thousand will let me get abroad, and settle down like a gentleman. I always did have a fancy for the West Indies; I shall buy a house and some land in the islands—a man can live a rare life out there if he's money. You won't hear of me again when all's done, I promise."

Lady Tarleton went on plucking at her lace—she had picked a hole in one of the cobwebby ruffles at her wrist. "When do you want this—this three thousand?" she demanded.

Hartigan considered the point.

"Let me have it pretty soon," he said; "and not here—I'd rather not come here any more. When the job's done, I'll nip out of the country and let you have my address for the rest of the cash. Just to lend colour to our interviews, you might put up a bit of a stone over Hannah—'Erected by her grateful mistress,' or some such rot."

"Where—where shall I send you the money—the three thousand?" murmured Lady Tarleton.

The ex-steward grinned.

"Bring, not send, your ladyship means," he corrected; "I'll give you a couple of days to get it. You can let me have it the evening of the day after to-morrow. I'll be at—at the mausoleum in the park, about midnight. You can easily slip out. Bank of England notes are good enough for me."

Lady Tarleton stood irresolute.

Dennis Hartigan donned his cap.

"I'll expect you," he said; "and remember, for that three thousand I'll tell you where the child is. Till then, your ladyship, *addios*, as they say in the West Indies. And the sooner I'm there the better for you and me—if not——" he had paused at the door to make the addition, "or someone else."

He came back into the room. "My lady," he added, "don't forget that if you and I can't do this deal—perhaps I can do one with—with——" He screened his mouth with his hollow palm—"With Mr. Stormont," he said, and retreated, chuckling.

EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

"I Wish I Could Tell you Everything."

"Eh, dear, Miss Moira, and are you sure you feel none the worse?"

Moira stepped from the small, dark fore-peak of the smack and turned to help Kit out of the same dingy retreat, where, by the light of a flickering oil-lamp, she herself had been discarding the heavy canvas garments of the diving-dress in favour of her ordinary apparel.

"Not the least little bit, Mr. Travis, thank you," she said, colouring deeply as she faced the trio of rough yet simple souls who had been John Davenal's trusted assistants in many a difficult task and hazardous enterprise.

The smack—making for a sheltered cove on the further side of the Head—was forging through the dusk off the shadowy promontory. The breeze had freshened and she was keeping well out from the rocky foot of the tall cliff.

"You didn't find what you went down for, missy?" pursued her questioner, fingering his harsh black beard.

Moira answered in the negative, and drew Kit to sit to windward of the heeling craft.

"No," she said sadly.

Travis fumbled nervously with the rim of his jersey, he was a lean, hard-featured man, with twinkling eyes that belied his unprepossessing exterior.

"You should have told us what it was, Miss Moira," he said. "I'd have gone down myself in a brace of shakes. You're a brave lass, my dear, and a cool, but there's a knack in seeing under the water, even with the electric light. It didn't stand to reason that you could do much and in that depth."

Moira sighed and answered nothing.

"Not but what I'll be sworn it was just a sick man's fancy," continued Travis, "and nothing there at all. Though what he could have thought he'd lost down there beats me. Anyhow, you can tell the governor you've been down—but if you'd been my daughter, Miss Moira, you shouldn't have done it. I was against your going down that first time, and I was against it now. Of course the governor's word is law, even if it's only a sick man's fancy."

And Mr. Travis repeated his former phrase with an evident appreciation of it. He broke off to issue an order or two, the smack came up into the wind, and one of the men hauled round the dinghy. Mr. Travis himself got in and took the sculls. Moira and her silent companion followed, and the little boat shot forwards over the sheltered waters of the cove.

When her passengers had landed on the dusky beach,

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Mr. Travis, bidding them a cheerful good-night, prepared to re-enter the boat. Moira laid a detaining hand upon his arm.

"Mr. Travis," she said, "I—I have been deceiving you, just a bit. Dad did not know I was going down—he—he only said he would be happier if—if—oh, I can't explain, Mr. Travis, and I can't tell you any more, but I felt perhaps I—I——" She stifled a sob.

"I didn't realise that it was so strange and confusing down there," she confessed; "I was only down in a couple of fathoms before and in daylight. But you will let the men think it was father's wish, won't you?"

"Y-yes, Miss Moira, by all means," stammered the other, bewildered; "but it's a riddle to me, that's what it is. And it'll beat me to keep the men from talking about it, to say nought of those fellows that passed us just as I took off the helmet for you. But I'll put the best face I can on it, Miss Moira, for your sake."

"Thank you so much," faltered Moira, and the diver's assistant, solemnly shaking his head, got into the dinghy and pushed off. Moira herself took the blind girl's arm and walked up the shingly beach.

For some while neither spoke. The two crossed the beach, mounted to the level of the road beyond, and followed it in the direction of Groudle Town. At last the prolonged silence of her companion aroused Moira.

"How quiet you are, Kit," she remarked; "are you very curious? I wish I could tell you everything. But I can't—yet. Wait till dad is better."

The blind girl gave a little squeeze of affection to the arm that lay in her own. "I'm not all that inquisitive, Mollie," she answered; "but do you mind telling me one thing? Has all this anything to do with somebody throwing something off the breakwater—oh, years and years ago."

Moira stared at the querist. "Kit," she said, "what do you mean—you—you can't know anything—and yet it might have been?"

Kit laughed. "What is *it*, Mollie?" she demanded.

Moira drew closer to her companion's side.

"Kit," she answered, in a low tone, "I—I don't know—I don't think I ought to tell you till—till father gets better and I can ask him if I may. But can't you tell me what you mean by 'throwing something off the breakwater years ago.'"

The blind girl hesitated. "I suppose I may as well," she said—"not that it's much information when all's said and done. But one night, when I was a mite of a thing—mother and I lived on the quay by the head of the pier then, and the breakwater had just been built. I used to go and sit on the landings out of the wind. I had a little stick to feel the edge of the steps, so I was quite safe."

"Yes, yes," exclaimed Moira impatiently; "and one night——"

"As I was saying," proceeded Kit calmly, "one night I was sitting on the steps, on the north side, and I heard someone coming along the breakwater above me. He—it was a man's voice—was singing in a drunken sort of way. Suddenly he stopped and I heard him say, 'This is out far enough, in with it.' Then there was a splash in the water near me."

Moira stood still. "Kit," she said, "how—how long ago was this?"

Kit deliberated. "Oh, about seventeen years," she answered. "I'm no chicken, Mollie; I'm twenty-five in June, and I was eight then. It made a queer impression on my mind that I've never forgotten."

"Seventeen years!" murmured Moira, "and I am nearly nineteen. It—it—oh, what a horrible riddle it all is! But didn't you hear anything else?"

"No," said the blind girl; "only heavy footsteps on the breakwater above, and then all was quiet."

Moira started forward. "Let us go home, Kit," she exclaimed. "I—I want to get back to the dear old cottage and forget everything except how happy I've always been."

(*Continued Overleaf.*)

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When they were on the verge of the tiny town, Moira halted again and put her arms about the blind girl.

"You won't mind my not explaining for a while, dear?" she asked. Kit kissed her.

"Not a bit, Mollie," she replied; "though it's very puzzling and I am curious."

Moira sighed and they went on, across the top of the harbour and over the dusky quays, to where the windows of Hawthorn Cottage twinkled upon the night.

In the living-room of the cottage a nurse sat at the table writing letters. She looked up as they entered and smiled.

"So you have got back," she remarked; "I hope you have enjoyed your walk."

Moira flushed a trifle—for deceit of all sorts was repellent to her, even the mild subterfuge by which she and Kit had arranged to account for their joint, if brief, absence—and answered gravely in the affirmative.

The nurse put down her pen and rose.

"The doctor has been in again," she said; "he thinks Mr. Davenal quite distinctly stronger. But your father still frets at not being allowed to see you. The doctor was obliged to give in on the point."

She checked Moira's impulsive gesture of satisfaction.

"But he is not to talk," she added; "the doctor was particular your father should promise him that, and you must not say more than a few words to him."

"Very well, nurse," assented Moira dispiritedly. She took off her short cloak and tam-o'-shanter cap and brushed back the yellow curls that the night wind had brought on to her forehead. Kit had stolen to the fire and was warming her chilled limbs—the April evening had grown cold and raw.

The nurse glanced at the clock. "You had better go up now, dear," she said; "for he must settle down soon for the night. I shall be going on duty myself immediately."

Moira stood a moment broodingly, before passing out into the hall and mounting the stairs. At the door of the wounded man's room, she tapped softly. The day-nurse opened it.

"Ah," observed the latter, with the bright unconcern that does so much for the nerves of an invalid; "here is your daughter, Mr. Davenal. Come in, dear. Your father is going to be very good and not talk. He is so very much better that he does not propose to run the least risk of overtiring himself."

Moira stepped forward into the pleasantly warmed and lighted room, and paused at the diver's bedside. His right hand lay on the counterpane, his eyes, meeting hers, travelled to it, and the fingers twitched. There was something in his mute appeal that touched Moira to the heart—she knelt down by the bed and took his hand in her own.

"Father!" she said brokenly, "dear, dear father!"

John Davenal's face shone suddenly and his hand contracted painfully upon hers.

"My little daughter," he murmured; "always my little daughter."

"Yes, father, dear," gasped Moira, and she looked through her tears at the kind, grave features of the strong man laid low.

John Davenal sighed gustily and closed his eyes; his face had relaxed into a quiet contentment.

The watch at the nurse's belt ticked audibly in the silence, and the fire crackled, but all else was still. Once or twice the diver breathed heavily. The nurse heard it and motioned to Moira to withdraw her hand. She did so, with infinite precaution. John Davenal still slept.

Moira crept from the room; the nurse lowered the light and came to shut the door.

"He is doing famously," she whispered; "I am so glad he didn't try to talk much; he seems to live upon the hope of seeing you."

A dry sob forced its way to Moira's lips as she retreated to the lower floor of the cottage. "I wish," she murmured desperately; "oh, I wish he had never told me—never!"

She stopped on a small landing to cover her face and weep noiselessly. Her position stung her to the quick. Not to know who she was or how she had come to the care of the simple, large-hearted man who had been to her both father and mother, not to know whether some ghastly stain might not lie upon her—her, the promised wife of Guy Vanbrugh; it was a situation fraught with too many grim possibilities for her to face it without a pang of misery.

But the pang did not last long. Guy Vanbrugh's words returned to her mind: "You and I against the world, darling, for the best thing in it—love."

She dried her eyes; she would be true to the oath she had taken, she would doubt neither herself nor him. Did not John Davenal love her with all the rough, strong, tender fatherhood of his generous nature? Was not Guy Vanbrugh her plighted husband—the man who had chosen her out of all the world to share his life and dwell in his heart?

Moira comforted herself. At least she was rich in love and she drew it around her spirit like an invisible cloak. But the sob still lingered in her throat—the waters had denied her the secret they held and she felt as vaguely unhappy as a lost child by some good Samaritan's fireside.

NINETEENTH CHAPTER.
What Dennis Hartigan Heard.

"A glass of bitter and some cold meat, and look sharp about it, my dear."

Dennis Hartigan picked a biscuit out of the tray on the bar at the Half Brick as he issued this instruction to the serving-maid behind it. Then he lifted the flap of the counter and stalked through into the sanded parlour beyond.

The room was hazy with tobacco smoke and the mingled odours of "old October" and hot grog; a circle of "habituals" sat round the high black fireplace, puffing all manner of pipes, from a briar to a churchwarden.

Dennis Hartigan nodded to one or two of the peaceful revellers and went to sit down in a corner and munch his biscuit. He folded his arms on his broad chest, drooped his chin on it, knitted his brows, and fell into a profound unconsciousness of all about him.

So sullen and absorbed did he seem as he sat there, his thoughts might well have been as sinister as himself.

The maid aroused him with his meal and he ate it with abstracted deliberation, glancing now and again at the gossippers about the fire.

Unexpectedly a name arrested his interest—it was that of "Mollie Davenal."

An old fisherman, with a grizzled beard and a shiny black "cutty" had taken the latter from his mouth to repeat a prior statement, of which the ex-steward had heard but part.

"Mol-lie Dav-en-al," said the speaker, beating time to the emphatic syllables with his pipe; "I seen her myself with these very eyes, and so did the gentleman from the Tower as was with me. And Peter Travis, John Davenal's own assistant, was taking off the helmet. She'd been down off the breakwater, in full diving-gear, and her hair—she has an amazing lot of fair hair, has Mollie Davenal—was all tumbling loose over her shoulders."

Dennis Hartigan set down the glass he had lifted to his lips. His eyes seemed as though they would start from his head.

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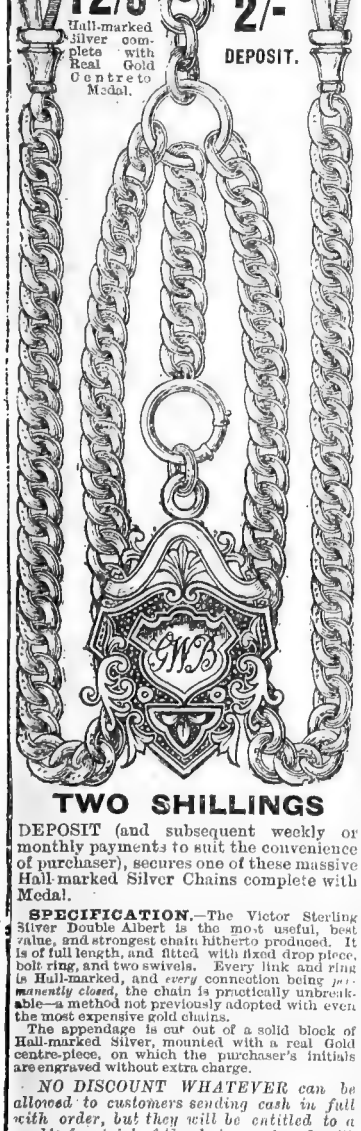

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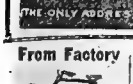

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"It's a shame," cried the young wife; "not a thing in the house fit to eat. I'm going straight home to papa!" "If you don't mind, dear," said the husband, reaching for his hat, "I'll go with you."

Spoilt the Story.

He: "What a daring bicyclist that Miss Dashley must be. I hear that when out riding the other day she went right over a cow lying in the road." "Yes, Miss Dashley went over, but the bicycle remained on the other side."

Why Kate is Single.

She told him her age was twenty-two, but he had looked the family Bible through you see, and knew her to be fully thirty-three. It grieved him thus to see the maid grossly prevaricate, and that's the reason why, 'tis said, he didn't marry Kate.

An Impossible Situation.

Mr. Wickwire: "What ridiculous, impossible things these fashion plates are!" Mrs. Wickwire: "I know they used to be, but most of them are engraved from photographs nowadays." Mr. Wickwire: "This one can't be. Here are two women going in opposite directions, both with brand new gowns on, and neither looking back at the other."

Her Happiest Moment.

"Until I met you, Matilda," he murmured in a voice husky with emotion, "I believed that all women were deceitful, but when I look into your clear, beautiful eyes, I behold there the very soul of candour and loyalty." "George," she exclaimed with enthusiasm, "this is the happiest moment I have known since papa took me to the London oculist!" "London oculist!" "Yes, dear, you never would have known that my left eye is a glass one." Then the moon went under a cloud, and George sat down and buried his face in the sofa cushion.

Where the Wool Came From.

She: "What is this mineral wool one reads so much about?" He: "Mineral wool? Why, that's the wool they shear from hydraulic rams!"

Managing a Husband.

He: "There isn't enough on this breakfast-table to feed a canary bird." She: "I know it, my dear; but there are several things I want you to order from the shops, and I know you'll forget all about it unless you leave the house hungry."

Stuffed Daughters.

Our Gallant Colonel: "Your daughters, my dear Mrs. Tympanum, are looking delightful to-night—simply delightful!" Mrs. Tympanum (rather hard of hearing, and very intent on a *roti* of ducklings): "Yes, aren't they? I've had them stuffed with sage and onions."

An Improving Young Man.

Maud: "How is Mr. Blushman getting along? Has he proposed yet?" Edith: "No, but he is improving. The first night he called he held the album in his hands all the evening; the second night he had my pug dog in his arms; last night he held Willie on his lap for an hour. I have hopes."

She Frightened Him.

Young Saphead: "Do you know, Miss Biggal, I've a gweat mind to fwighten you by wocking the boat?" Miss Biggal (an athletic young woman): "A young man like you tried that with me once, and the boat upset." "Did it weally? What did you do?" "I swam ashore and notified the coroner."

Too Expensive a Luxury.

"I know we are poor, dear papa," said Evelyn, nestling her head against his shoulder, "but Charles is brave and hopeful, and he says that love will make a way." "I know it will," said the old banker grimly. "It made away with two tons of best coal and two pounds' worth of gas last winter, and before long we will begin again, I suppose."

Time to Go.

"Claribel," called out the old gentleman in a loud, rasping, and emphatic voice from the head of the staircase at 11.30 p.m., "you tell that long-haired, sallow-faced, spider legged feller in the parlour there to take his hat and walk off; and if ever he comes here again I'll kick him right through his necktie." "Alfred," murmured the young woman pensively, "something seems to tell me we'd better part."

A Vile Plot!

"John, my dressmaker called to-day, and I must have the material to-morrow," said Mrs. Adam, "Eh? What? You said you had written to her not to come until next month," replied the husband. "Yes, I did, but she never got the letter." "Woman! This is a plot—a vile plot!" cried Mr. Adam, clasping his hand to his breast-pocket. "If you really wanted her to stay away you would have posted that letter yourself; you wouldn't have given it to me."

A Man Without a Heart.

"You have no heart!" Pale but tearless she stood before him, and looked him squarely in the eye. She was poor, but proud. Adverse fortune had reduced her wardrobe to a calico basis, driven her and her only surviving mother to the top flat of a back street house, and hardened the lines about her still beautiful mouth, but it could not dim the lustre of her blue-black eye, or tame the unconquerable spirit that animated every fibre of the lissom form, standing erect with unconscious grace, and awaiting his answer. "You have no heart!" she repeated. "No, miss," replied the butcher, "but we've got some very good liver. Will that do just as well?"

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Conducted by CYNTHIA.

[In this page are answered any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to Miss Cynthia Hamilton, c/o the Editor of Short Stories.*]*

Regarding Pseudonyms.

Readers have been adopting such long and awkward pseudonyms lately that I must ask them in future to use either their initials, or names which are quite short, for this purpose.

♣♣♣

Wants a Wife.

"A Neglected Man," who lives in Cape Colony, is thirty-two. He is earning a good income, but up to the present has not been able to find a girl suitable to become his wife. He is expecting to visit England next year, and in the meantime would like to correspond with a young lady with a view to matrimony, or find some other way of leaving the state of bachelordom.

* * * * *

I am sorry I cannot help you to find a young lady, but I did not undertake to become a matrimonial agent. There surely must be plenty of nice girls in Cape Colony, on one of whom you could bestow your affections. If you have not found one by the time your visit to England takes place you perhaps will have better luck then.

♣♣♣

Eighteen and Twenty-three.

"Paddy's Darlint" is eighteen, and is keeping company with a man of twenty-three. Her parents think the difference in age is too great for marriage to result. "Paddy's Darlint" is going away from the town in which she lives, and wants to know whether it would be wrong for her to write to the young man during her absence—it is his suggestion that she should do so.

* * * * *

I should hardly consider a difference of only five years a bar to matrimony, "Paddy's Darlint." If it were more than that there might be some reason for your parents' objections. As regards writing to the young man during your absence, you must be guided entirely by your own inclinations. If you really care for him, by all means write. If not, your going away will be a good opportunity for dropping him.

♣♣♣

How to Become Engaged.

"S. H. Y." is in love with a girl, and his affections are returned. He is wanting to become engaged, but hasn't the slightest idea how to set about it; whether he ought to ask the girl if she is willing to marry him or what.

* * * * *

I suppose you intend your engagement to end in marriage, "S. H. Y.," so, of course, you must ask the girl if she is willing to marry you—that is always the first step in a serious engagement. I am really very surprised that you should ask such a foolish question.

An Explanation Necessary.

"W. S." (Alloa), who is a man, was asked to a dance by a lady who had always been very affable to him, but at the dance she was decidedly cool, and when asked for an explanation of the coolness would not give any. "W. S." was rather persistent in asking for an explanation, and at the end of the dance she would hardly speak to him. He now wants to know whether he should write and apologise for his persistency, or not take any further notice of her?

* * * * *

If I were you, "W. S.," I should wait for a few days in case you might meet her, when you would see how she treated you. If she was quite friendly, you could apologise for your persistency; if otherwise, you could do nothing.

* * * * *

If you do not meet her inside a week, I should write her a letter asking why she was so cool to you on the night of the dance, and offering to call on her if she would allow you to do so, in case an explanation might be necessary. You would have to be guided by her reply as to your future behaviour.

♣♣♣

A Disheartened Lover.

"T. L." (Glasgow) is very much in love with a girl. He is a Protestant, but she is a Roman Catholic, and she says they could never marry because of the difference in religion. "T. L." has offered to become a Roman Catholic, but she will not hear of it. She does not appear to return his love, and he has written to her, but received no answer. What ought he to do to get to know if she really cares for him?

* * * * *

I should advise you to do as you suggest; that is, write asking her to meet you at a certain place. You should then declare your love for her and ask her if she cares for you in the same way. If she does not, then, of course, you can do nothing else but give up all hope of ever winning her. If she does love you she will tell you so, and then your difficulty will be at an end. I must say, however, that I do not counsel marriage between Protestants and Roman Catholics; it is difficult for people holding such widely different beliefs to live happily together.

♣♣♣

Wants an Introduction.

"F. G." has fallen in love with a girl whom he sees every evening in the train. He knows where she lives, but doesn't know her name, and thinks that they have no mutual friends, so he wonders how they can obtain an introduction.

* * * * *

If you have no mutual friends, "F. G.," your best way of getting to know the young lady will be to perform some little act of politeness to her in the train. You can open the door for her when she wants to get out, reach her umbrella or parcels down from the rack, or perform some other little service. If you do this repeatedly—don't make yourself too obtrusive when doing it—in time you will feel that you know each other quite well, and a formal introduction will be unnecessary.

♣♣♣

A Lame Lover.

Puzzled has fallen in love with a young lady who keeps a tobacconist's shop. Their courting has been conducted over the counter, and he has only just discovered that the young lady is lame. What ought he to do in the matter?

* * * * *

There is no reason why a lame girl should not make just as good a wife as one without an infirmity, provided the lameness does not prevent her getting about easily. So I see no reason why you should not propose marriage to the young lady if you really love her.

Cynthia

Printed by Horace Cox, Bream's Buildings, London, E.C., and published by C. Arthur Pearson Ltd., Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

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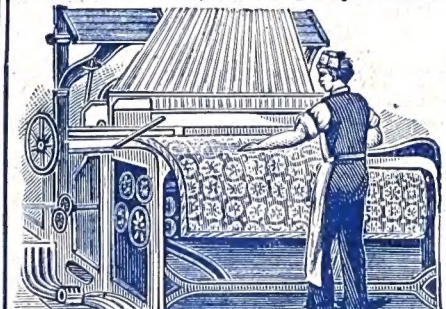

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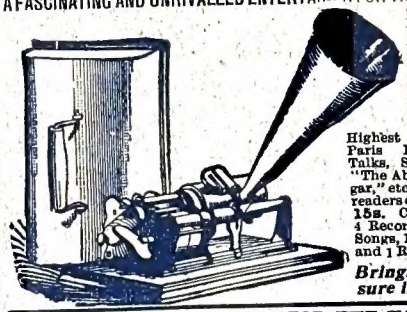

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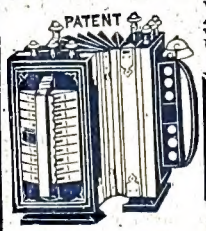

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